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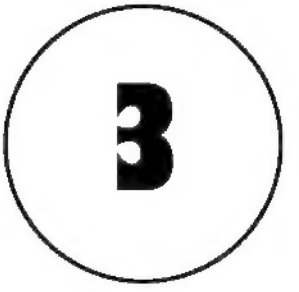
SUZUKA
KOUJI SEO

SUZUKA



Kouji Seo

TRANSLATED AND ADAPTED BY
David Ury

LETTERED BY
Janice Chiang

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Suzuka 3

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A Note from the Author

Everybody knows that I'm a huge fan of the Hiroshima Carp. My dream is to someday put a big Suzuka sign up in Hiroshima Stadium and have one of the Carp players hit a home run right into it. I hope the Carp are winning when this book comes out.

Honorifics Explained

Throughout the Del Rey Manga books, you will find Japanese honorifics left intact in the translations. For those not familiar with how the Japanese use honorifics and, more important, how they differ from American honorifics, we present this brief overview.

Politeness has always been a critical facet of Japanese culture. Ever since the feudal era, when Japan was a highly stratified society, use of honorifics—which can be defined as polite speech that indicates relationship or status—has played an essential role in the Japanese language. When addressing someone in Japanese, an honorific usually takes the form of a suffix attached to one's name (example: "Asuna-san"), is used as a title at the end of one's name, or appears in place of the name itself (example: "Negi-sensei," or simply "Sensei!").

Honorifics can be expressions of respect or endearment. In the context of manga and anime, honorifics give insight into the nature of the relationship between characters. Many English translations leave out these important honorifics and therefore distort the feel of the original Japanese. Because Japanese honorifics contain nuances that English honorifics lack, it is our policy at Del Rey not to translate them. Here, instead, is a guide to some of the honorifics you may encounter in Del Rey Manga.

-san: This is the most common honorific and is equivalent to Mr., Miss, Ms., or Mrs. It is the all-purpose honorific and can be used in any situation where politeness is required.

-sama: This is one level higher than "-san." It is used to confer great respect.

-dono: This comes from the word "tono," which means "lord." It is an even higher level than "-sama" and confers utmost respect.

-kun: This suffix is used at the end of boys' names to express familiarity or endearment. It is also sometimes used by men among friends, or when addressing someone younger or of a lower station.

-chan: This is used to express endearment, mostly toward girls. It is also used for little boys, pets, and even among lovers. It gives a sense of childish cuteness.

Bozu: This is an informal way to refer to a boy, similar to the English terms "kid" and "squirt."

Sempai/
Senpai: This title suggests that the addressee is one's senior in a group or organization. It is most often used in a school setting, where underclassmen refer to their upperclassmen as "sempai." It can also be used in the workplace, such as when a newer employee addresses an employee who has seniority in the company.

Kohai: This is the opposite of "sempai" and is used toward underclassmen in school or newcomers in the workplace. It connotes that the addressee is of a lower station.

Sensei: Literally meaning "one who has come before," this title is used for teachers, doctors, or masters of any profession or art.

[blank]: This is usually forgotten in these lists, but it is perhaps the most significant difference between Japanese and English. The lack of honorific means that the speaker has permission to address the person in a very intimate way. Usually, only family, spouses, or very close friends have this kind of permission. Known as *yobisute,* it can be gratifying when someone who has earned the intimacy starts to call one by one's name without an honorific. But when that intimacy hasn't been earned, it can be very insulting.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

YAMATO AKITSUKI

SUZUKA ASAHINA

YASUNOBU HATTORI

HONOKA SAKURAI

SOUICHI MIYAMOTO

MIKI HASHIBA

YUUKA SAOTOME

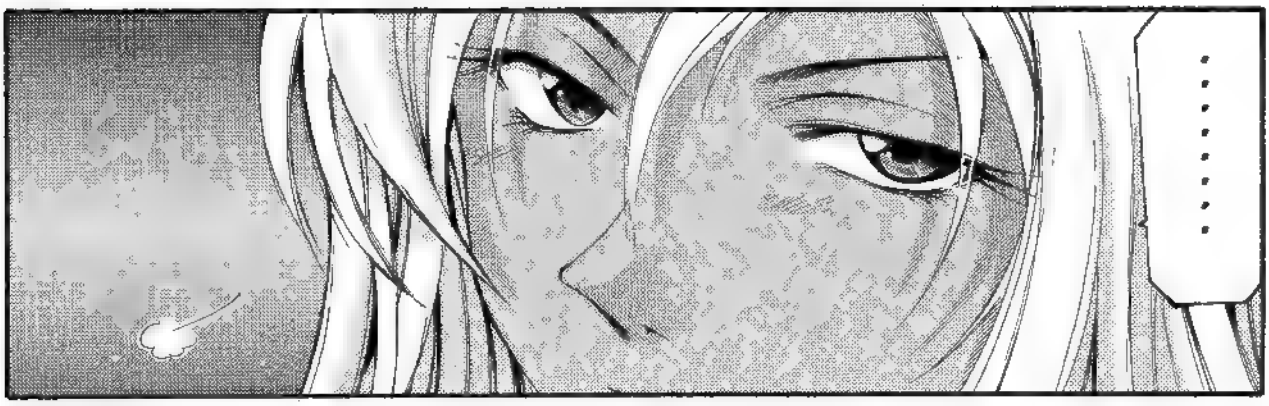
MEGUMI MATSUMOTO

THE STORY SO FAR

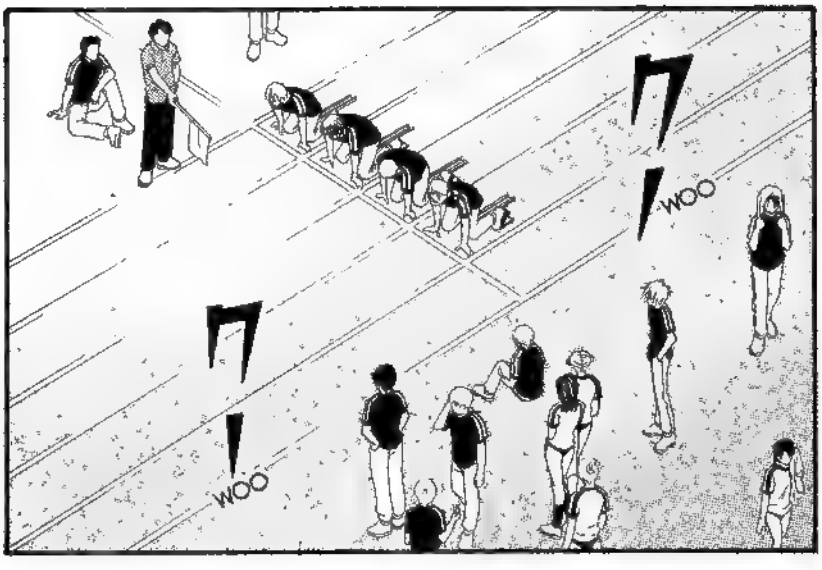
FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD YAMATO AKITSUKI MOVES TO TOKYO HOPING THAT TRANSFERRING INTO A HIGH SCHOOL THERE WILL CHANGE HIS LIFE FOR THE BETTER. ONCE IN TOKYO, YAMATO MOVES INTO A GIRLS-ONLY APARTMENT COMPLEX/ BATHHOUSE RUN BY HIS AUNT. ONE DAY YAMATO COMES ACROSS A GORGEOUS GIRL AT HIS SCHOOL. HE IS SHOCKED WHEN HE LEARNS THAT THIS BEAUTIFUL GIRL, SUZUKA ASA-HINA, LIVES IN THE ROOM RIGHT NEXT TO HIS. ON TOP OF THAT, SHE'S EVEN IN HIS CLASS. . . . YAMATO AKITSUKI'S ONCE-DULL LIFE IS FINALLY STARTING TO CHANGE.

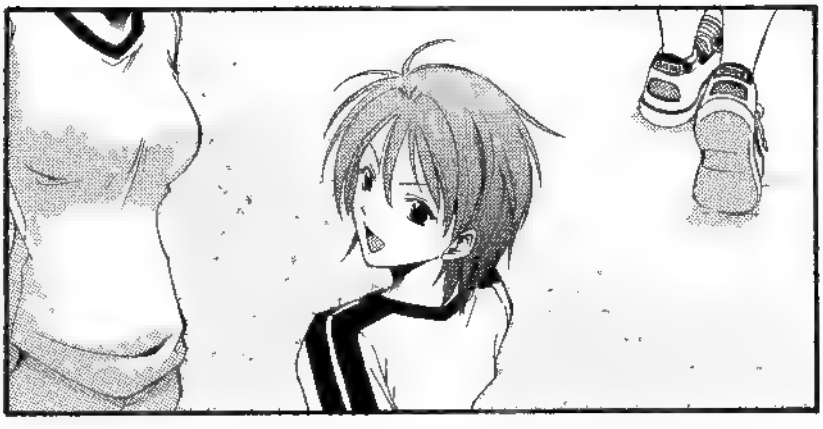
SUZUKA
#14 Departure

BLOOP
HEY!
HEY, YAMATO-KUN! THE WATER'S LUKEWARM!
BEEP
ANSWER ME, YAMATO!
BEEP


.....

カ
DING
キ
DING
コ
DONG


WOO
WOO



.....
...STARTING TO FALL IN LOVE...
MAYBE I AM...
MAYBE WE CAN CATCH THE PARADE.
COME ON!
THERE'S NO GOING BACK NOW.
I ALREADY TOLD HER I LOVE HER.

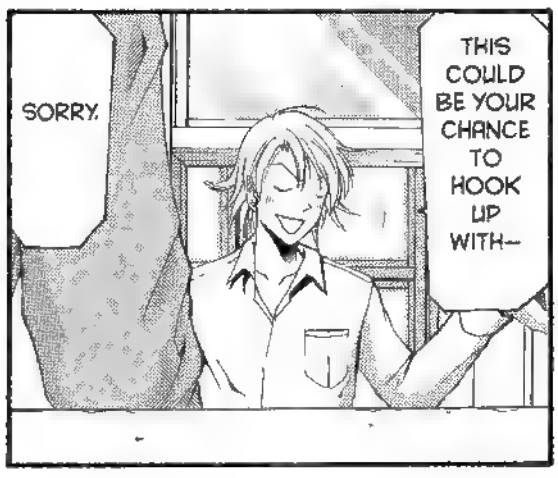
WHY DID I SAY THAT?
WAS IT BECAUSE SHE HUGGED ME THAT TIME?
I MUST'VE TOTALLY MISINTERPRETED EVERYTHING.
I'M SUCH AN IDIOT.
HEY.
WAS IT BECAUSE SHE LET ME TAKE HER TO THE THEME PARK?

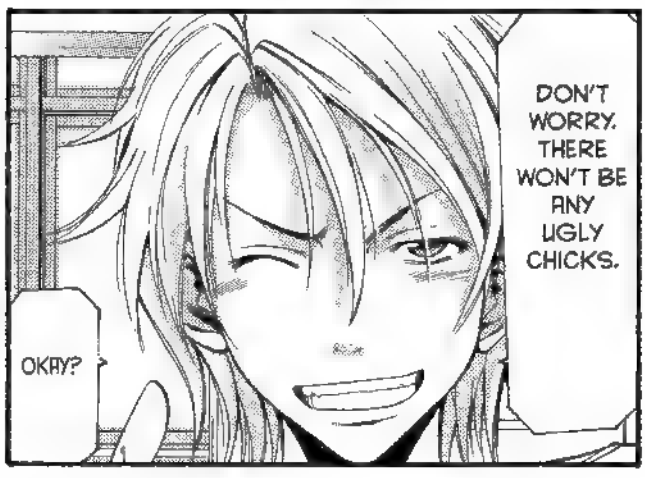
WOO
WOO

.....

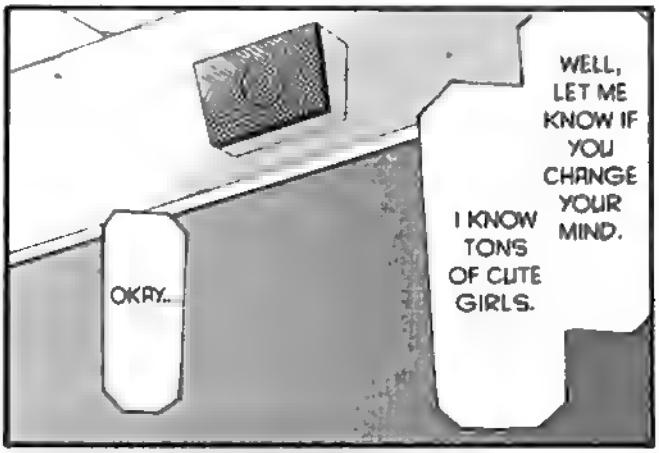
YASU-NOBU.
ARE YOU GOING HOME OR WHAT?
QUIT SPACING OUT.

.....
I'M GOING TO A GOKON DATING PARTY, AND WE'RE ONE GUY SHORT.
HOW ABOUT COMING ALONG?


SORRY.
THIS COULD BE YOUR CHANCE TO HOOK UP WITH—


DON'T WORRY. THERE WON'T BE ANY UGLY CHICKS.
OKAY?

NO THANK'S.
.....

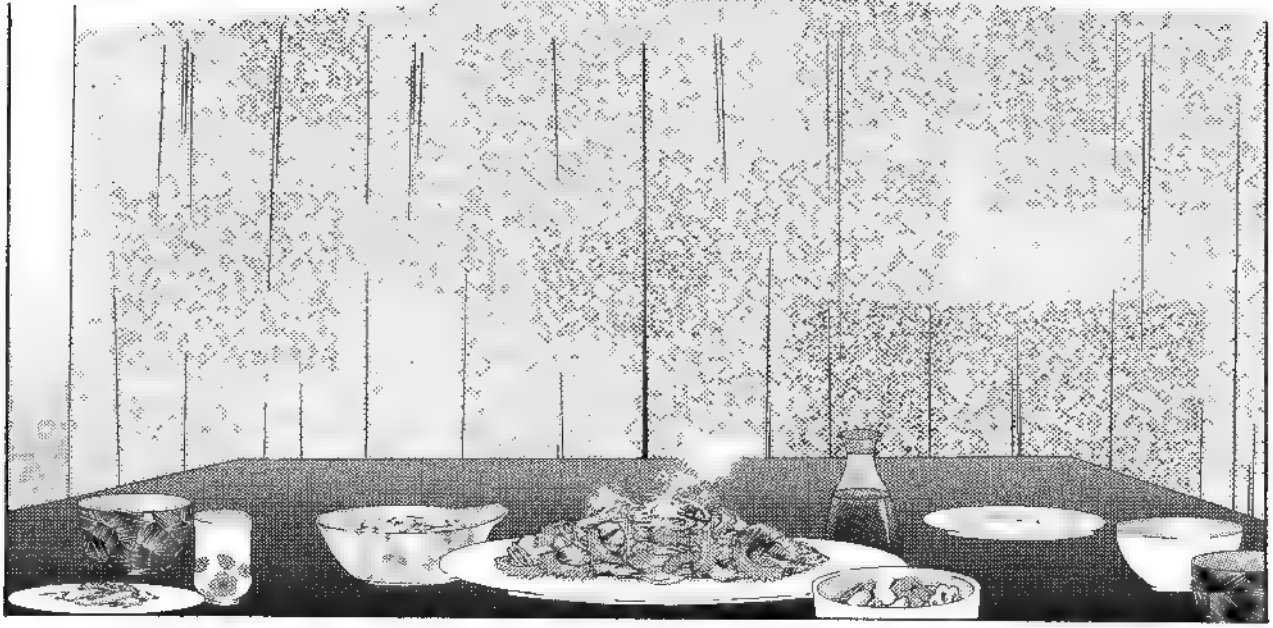

WELL, LET ME KNOW IF YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND.
I KNOW TON'S OF CUTE GIRLS.
OKAY..

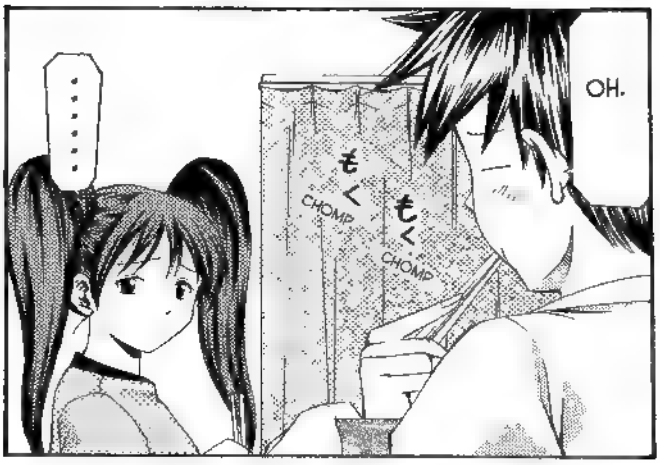
.....
OH.

I JUST GOT MY HEART BROKEN YESTERDAY...
I CAN'T EVEN THINK ABOUT OTHER GIRLS RIGHT NOW.

IT'S NICE OF HIM TO TRY TO CHEER ME UP, BUT...
NOW WHERE AM I GONNA FIND ANOTHER GUY?

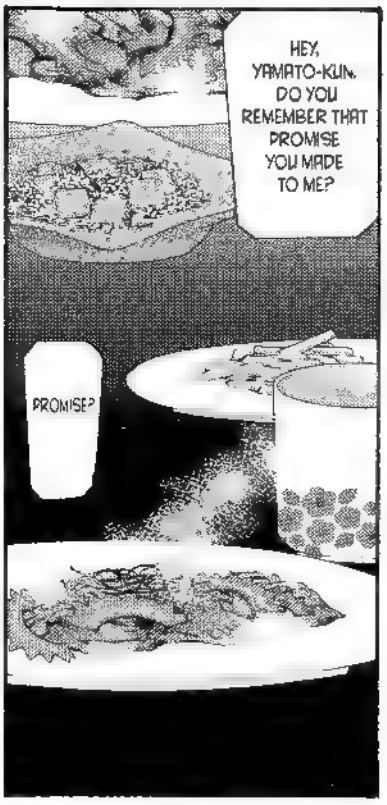
ちら、
GLANCE




OH.
.....
もぐ
CHOMP
もぐ
CHOMP

SHE HAD DINNER WITH HER FRIENDS ON THE WAY HOME FROM PRACTICE.
HEY, AYANO-SAN... WHERE'S ASAHINA?

YOU PROMISED TO MARRY ME WHEN I'M ALL GROWN UP!

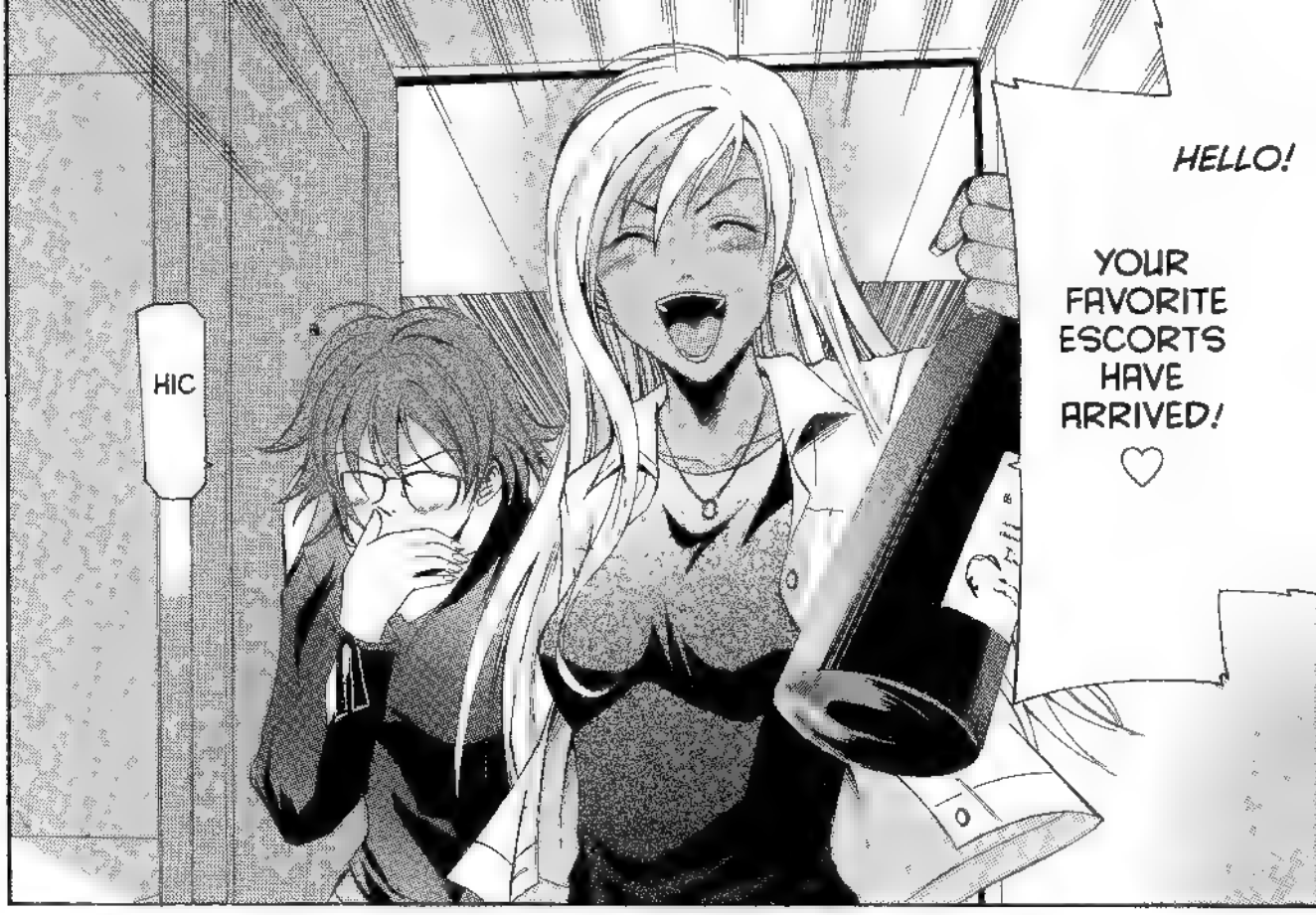

HEY, YAMATO-KUN. DO YOU REMEMBER THAT PROMISE YOU MADE TO ME?
PROMISE?

I JUST REMEMBERED IT, THAT'S ALL.
WHY ARE YOU BRINGING THAT UP?

OH YEAH...
I THINK SHE TRICKED ME INTO MAKING THAT PROMISE.
OH YEAH, REMEMBER THAT.
YOU USED TO TALK ABOUT MARRYING YAMATO-KUN ALL THE T ME BACK WHEN YOU WERE N KINDERGARTEN, M HO.
HEE HEE
DON'T WORRY, YAMATO-KUN!
EVEN IF NO ONE ELSE WILL GO OUT WITH YOU, I'LL STILL MARRY YOU.
EVEN LITTLE MIHO-CHAN IS TRYING TO CHEER ME UP. HOW PATHETIC.
I WANT A SILK WEDDING DRESS COVERED N JEWELS.
WHATEVER.
HA, HA... THANKS.
SHE MUST KNOW I GOT SHOT DOWN BY ASAHINA.

カン
カン

...MAN...
SHE CAN'T EVEN TALK TO ME.
.....
SLAM
I'M GOING TO BED.
I FEEL LIKE I'M GONNA START BAWLING AGAIN.
!
DING DONG
CLICK
D-DON'T WORRY... I'M NOT UPSET OR ANYTHING...
COULD THAT BE ASAHINA?


HIC
HELLO!
YOUR FAVORITE ESCORTS HAVE ARRIVED!

WAS GETTING SHOT DOWN...
SOMEONE'S IN A BAD MOOD.

WHA—
GO HOME.

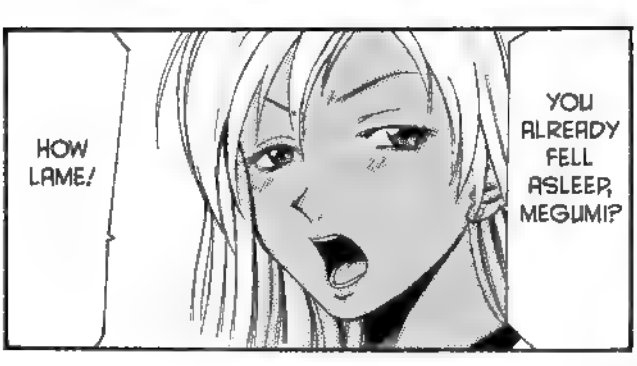
...BY SUZUKA-CHAN REALLY SUCH A SHOCK?
WAH!
SHIVER

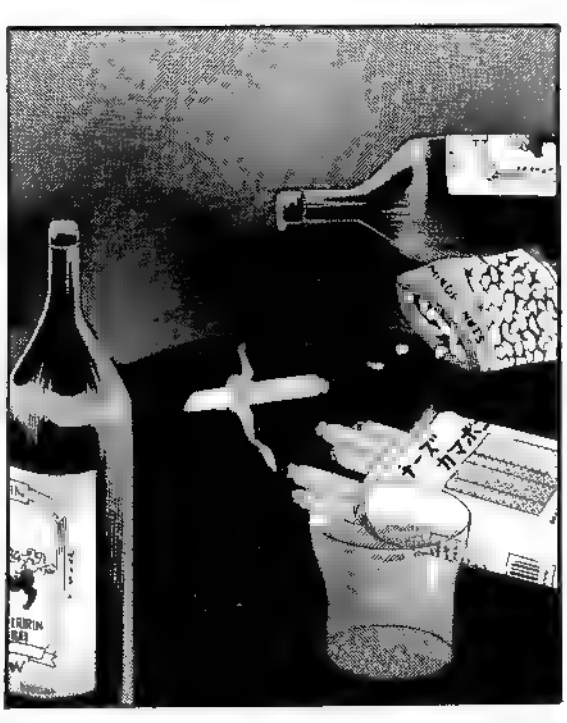
YOU ARE THE DEVIL.
SO WE JUST CAME BY TO GET A GOOD LOOK AT THAT FACE OF YOURS.
HOW DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT?
IT'S WRITTEN ALL OVER YOUR FACE.
HUH?
YOU GOT SHOT DOWN, YAMATO-KUN?
YOU POOR THING.
HIC
HUH?
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING, MEGUMI-SAN?
WELL, THEN...
SWIP
YOU CAN GIVE THEM A LITTLE SQUEEZE, BUT JUST THIS ONCE.
SO THAT'S HOW IT IS...
GLARE

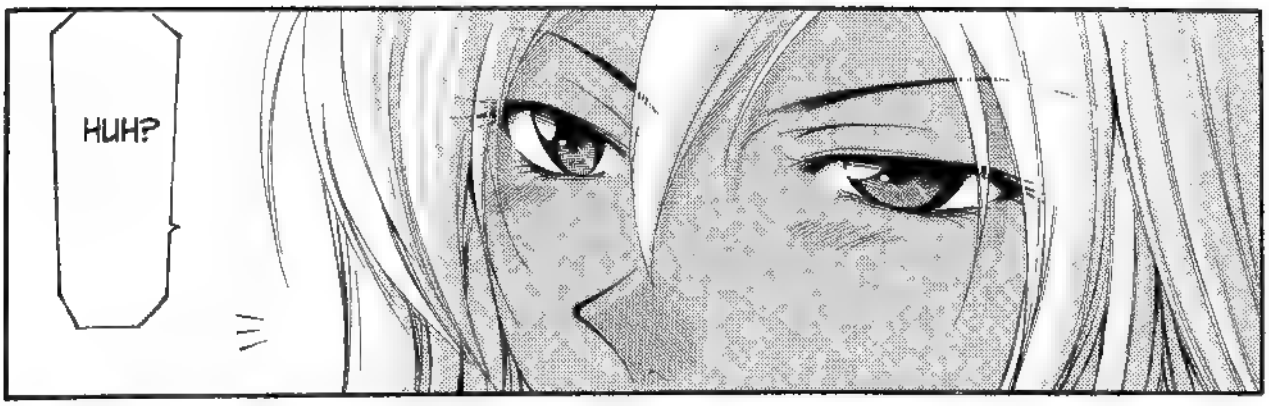
WAH!
SMACK
ONCE YOU'RE TIRED OF MY BOOBS, YOU JUST THROW ME AWAY LIKE A PIECE OF TRASH?

WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE THIS?
ALL RIGHT! LET'S GET OUR DRINK ON!
YOU MEN ARE ALL THE SAME!

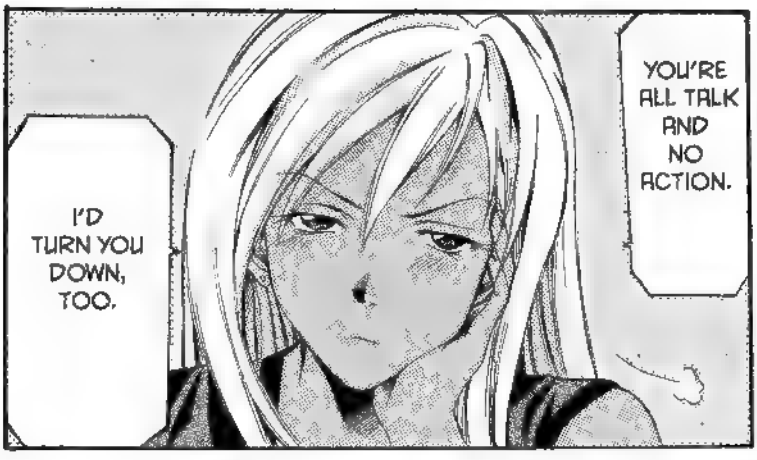
SNURFLE... SNORT
ZZZ
ZZZ


HOW LAME!
YOU ALREADY FELL ASLEEP, MEGUMI?




HUH?

WOO
WOO


YOU'RE ALL TALK AND NO ACTION.
I'D TURN YOU DOWN, TOO.

THWUNK
ARE YOU JUST GONNA SIT THERE FEELING SORRY FOR YOURSELF?
DON'T BE SUCH A PUSSY.
SHUT UP.

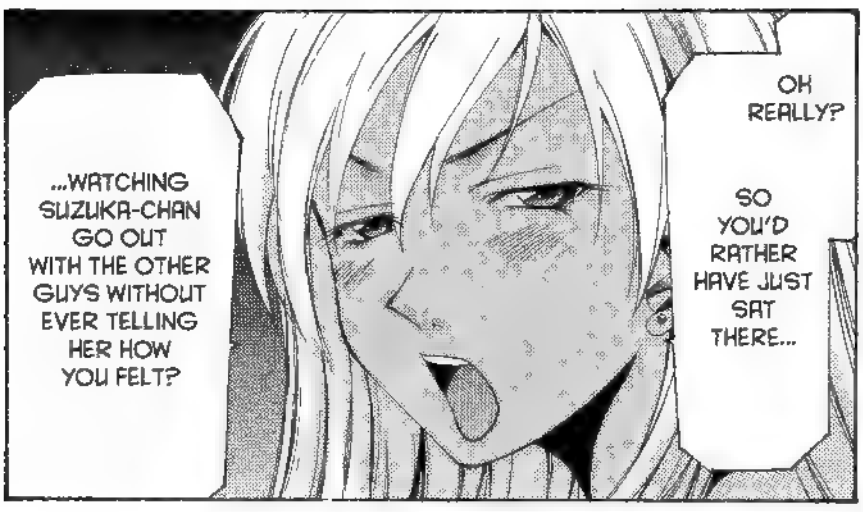
STAB
STAB
YOU NEED TO START ACTING LIKE A MAN.
YOU KNOW, THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A "NICE GUY" AND A "WISHY-WASHY WUSS."

URRMPH...
WAH!
KYA!
AH!

HEH, HEH. DID I SCARE YOU?
STOP ACTING LIKE A LITTLE KID?
JR. BROTHER
WHY DON'T YOU COME OUT HERE WITH ME AND COOL OFF?
HAND ME SOME SAKE

NOTHING BEATS DRINKING SAKE IN THE FRESH AIR!
AHH!

...TOLD HER HOW I FELT.
I NEVER SHOULD'VE...

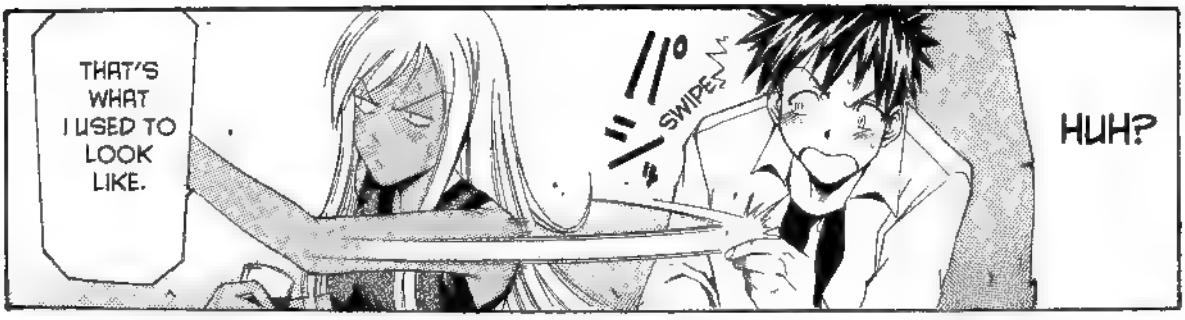

...WATCHING SUZUKA-CHAN GO OUT WITH THE OTHER GUYS WITHOUT EVER TELLING HER HOW YOU FELT?
OH REALLY?
SO YOU'D RATHER HAVE JUST SAT THERE...

ACTUALLY...
THAT SOUNDS EVEN WORSE.
.....

YOU'RE SO LUCKY, YUUKA-SAN. YOU'RE ALWAYS IN A GOOD MOOD.
HUH?

HUH?
HMM...
I GOT SHOT DOWN JUST LIKE YOU DID HE TOLD ME WAS TOO PLAIN LOOKING
WHEN I WAS A FRESHMAN IN HIGH SCHOOL, I HAD A HUGE CRUSH ON THIS OLDER GUY
パカッ
FLIP
H-HUH?
PLAIN LOOKING? HE CALLED YOU PLAIN LOOKING?
HUH?
HERE
TAKE A LOOK DON'T THINK I
旭湯

WHO'S THAT?
.....
...IT'S ME.
P506


THAT'S WHAT I USED TO LOOK LIKE.
SWIPE
HUH?

BUT EVERY TIME I TRIED TO TALK TO HIM, HE SHOT ME RIGHT DOWN.
ASAHIYU BATHS
I GOT PIERCINGS, I DYED MY HAIR, I WORE EXPENSIVE CLOTHES...
AFTER THAT I TRIED ALL KINDS OF THINGS TO GET HIM TO LIKE ME.
SH-SHE DID LOOK KIND OF PLAIN...
GUESS SHE WANTED TO TRY THE OTHER EX-TREME...

YOU DIDN'T GIVE UP AFTER THE FIRST TIME?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN EVERY TIME?

I'M IN LOVE WITH HIM.
HOW COULD I?

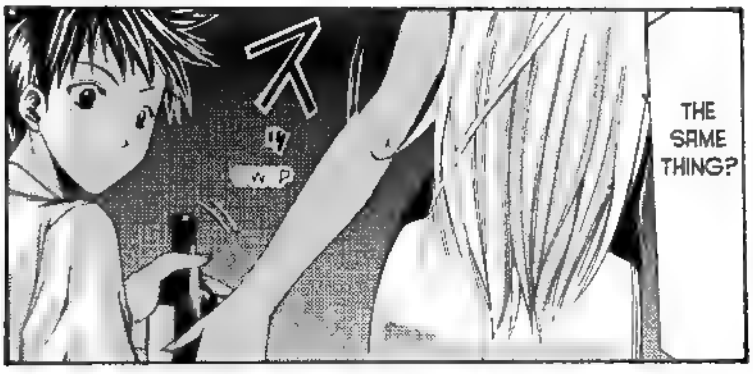
SO I TRIED TO FORGET ABOUT HIM BY DATING OTHER GUYS.
WELL, HE ENDED UP MOVING TO THE STATES FOR WORK...

.....

BUT... YOU KNOW...
I HAD FUN, AND I DID MEET SOME REALLY NICE GUYS.

I JUST CAN'T...
...FORGET HIM...

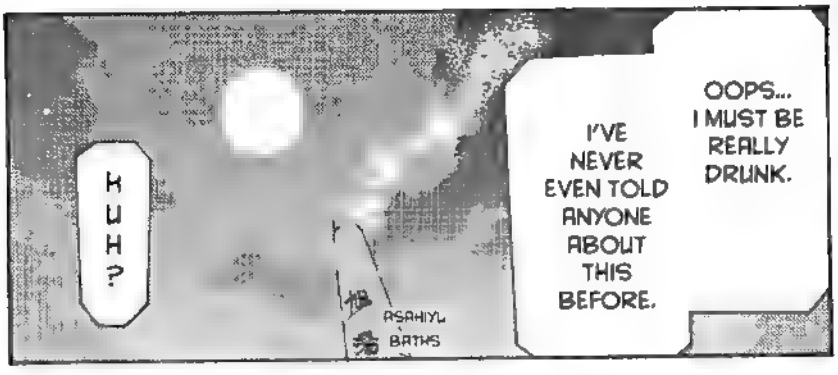
.....


THE SAME THING?

GOD, WHY DO YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE ABOUT TO CRY AGAIN?
I-I'M NOT...I WAS JUST THINKING... WE KIND OF WENT THROUGH THE SAME THING.

DON'T BE STUPID.
YOU DON'T SEE ME SITTING AROUND WALLOWING IN MY OWN SELF-PITY, DO YOU?

SOMEDAY I'M GONNA FIGURE OUT HOW TO...
...MAKE HIM WANT ME!


OOPS... I MUST BE REALLY DRUNK.
I'VE NEVER EVEN TOLD ANYONE ABOUT THIS BEFORE.
HUH?
ASAHIYU BATHS

YUUKA-SAN...

YOU'D BETTER NOT TELL A SOUL OR...
I'LL MAKE SURE THE WHOLE WORLD SEES THAT LITTLE MOVIE I SHOT OF YOU.

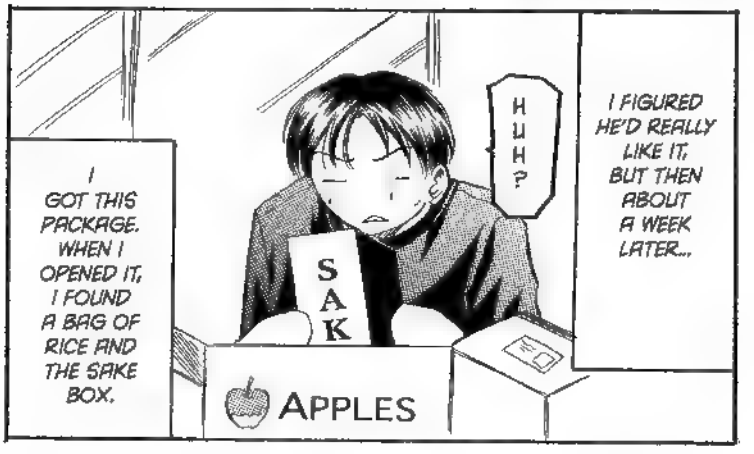
WON'T TELL ANY-ONE.
HMMM...

I THOUGHT I HAD TO GIVE UP ON ASAHINA.
I THOUGHT THAT ONCE YOU GOT SHOT DOWN, THAT WAS IT...
I WAS WRONG!
BUT...
HUH? HEY! WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
GLUG
.....
NOW I FINALLY GET IT.
SLURP!

I THOUGHT MY LIFE MIGHT CHANGE...
...IF I MOVED TO TOKYO, AND...
FWINK
I JUST HAD A FEELING GOOD THINGS WOULD HAPPEN.
...WENT TO HIGH SCHOOL IN THE BIG CITY.
BUT...IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW FAR AWAY I MOVE...
I...
NOTHING'S GONNA HAPPEN IF I JUST SIT AROUND WAITING FOR MY LIFE TO CHANGE!

I LOVE SUZUKA ASAHINA!
AND I'M NOT GIVING UP!

I THINK HE'S FINALLY BECOME A REAL MAN.
HEH, HEH.
I CAN HEAR YOU, YOU KNOW...! GEEZ...
ENOUGH SITTING AROUND WAITING...
SHUT UP!
I'M GONNA DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!


I GOT THIS PACKAGE. WHEN I OPENED IT, I FOUND A BAG OF RICE AND THE SAKE BOX.
HUH?
SAK
APPLES
I FIGURED HE'D REALLY LIKE IT, BUT THEN ABOUT A WEEK LATER...

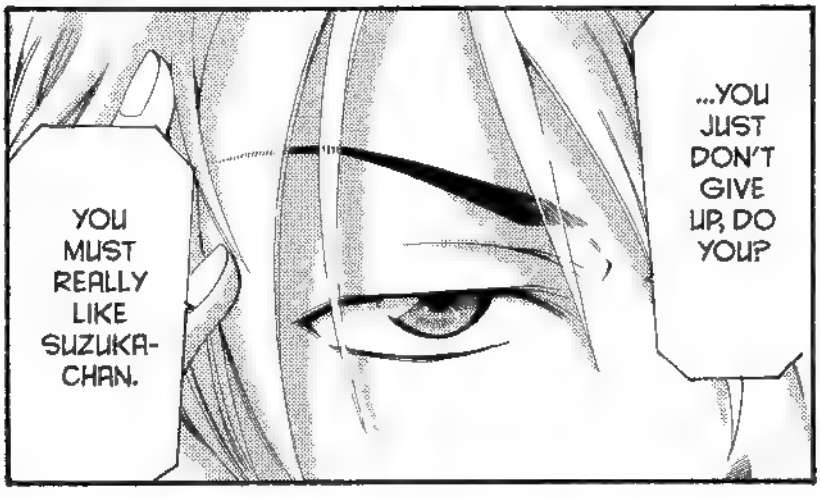
SUZUKA FOUR-PANEL THEATER NUMBER NINE
TRICKED

カチャ
CLICK
AH...
HEY.
GOOD MORNING!

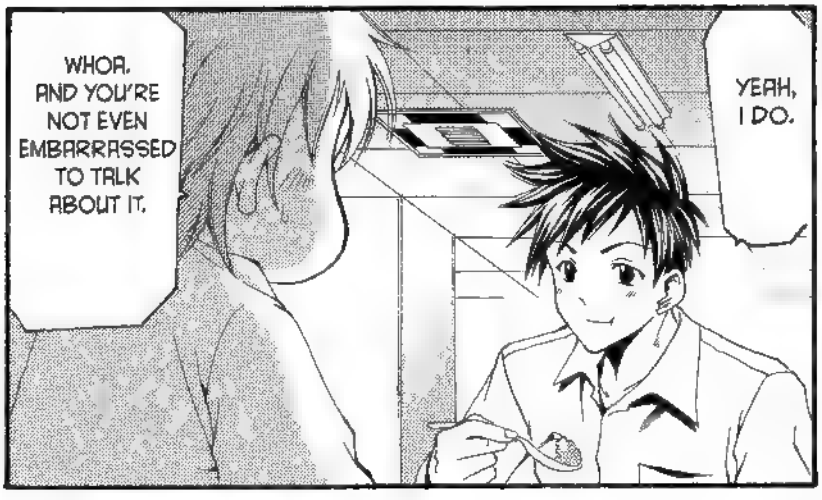
SUZUKA

#15 Determination

HMM...


YOU MUST REALLY LIKE SUZUKA-CHAN.
...YOU JUST DON'T GIVE UP, DO YOU?

SO SHE'S GONNA GO OUT TO EAT WITH YOU, HUH?
I GUESS IT NEVER HURTS TO TRY.


WHOA. AND YOU'RE NOT EVEN EMBARRASSED TO TALK ABOUT IT.
YEAH, I DO.

UH...
NOT EXACTLY. YOU SEE...
YOU GONNA MOVE IN FOR THE KILL?
SO WHAT'S YOUR GAME PLAN FOR TONIGHT?

I'M GONNA JOIN THE TRACK TEAM.

HUH?
.....

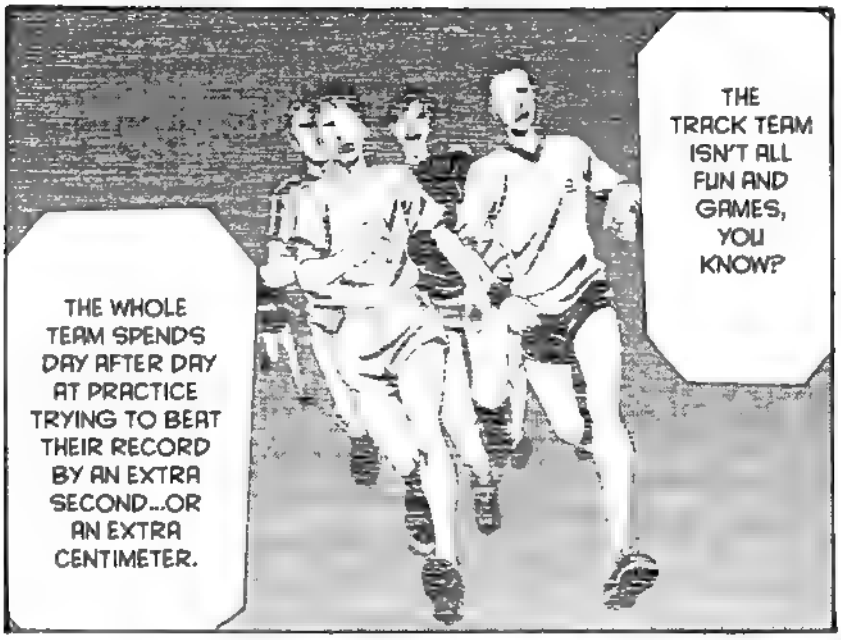
WELL...
AT FIRST, I THOUGHT SUZUKA-CHAN FELL FOR YOU AFTER SHE SAW HOW FAST YOU WERE BUT...

THE TRACK TEAM?
Y-YEAH.

THIS ISN'T ABOUT HOW FAST I AM...
SLURP
NOW I JUST DON'T SEE IT.
I JUST WANNA...
...SPEND AS MUCH TIME WITH HER AS I CAN.
.....
YEAH, BUT...
AH...

ASAHINA...
I...
PWUP

I OVERHEARD YOUR CONVERSATION...
SORRY...

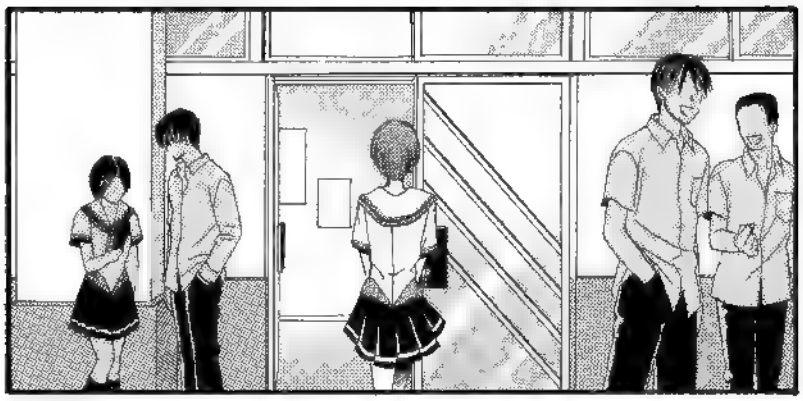

THE WHOLE TEAM SPENDS DAY AFTER DAY AT PRACTICE TRYING TO BEAT THEIR RECORD BY AN EXTRA SECOND...OR AN EXTRA CENTIMETER.
THE TRACK TEAM ISN'T ALL FUN AND GAMES, YOU KNOW?

ARE YOU SERIOUS ABOUT THIS?
HUH?

WELL...
I'LL PROBABLY MANAGE SOMEHOW.

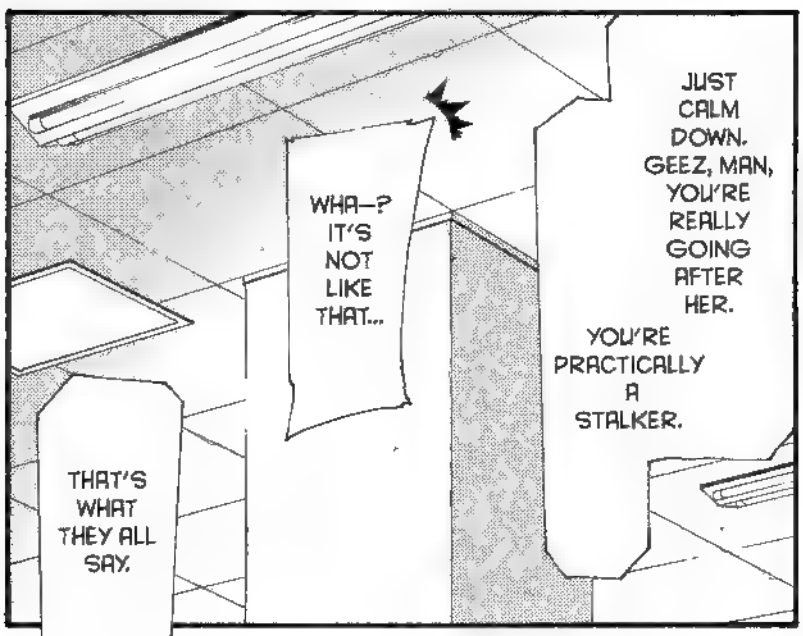
DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN HANDLE IT, YAMATO-KUN?

SO IF IT'S TOO HARD, YOU'RE JUST GONNA GIVE UP?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN PROBABLY?
IDIOT.
IF YOU JOIN UP WITH THAT ATTITUDE...
...YOU'RE JUST GONNA WEIGH THE TEAM DOWN.
...!!



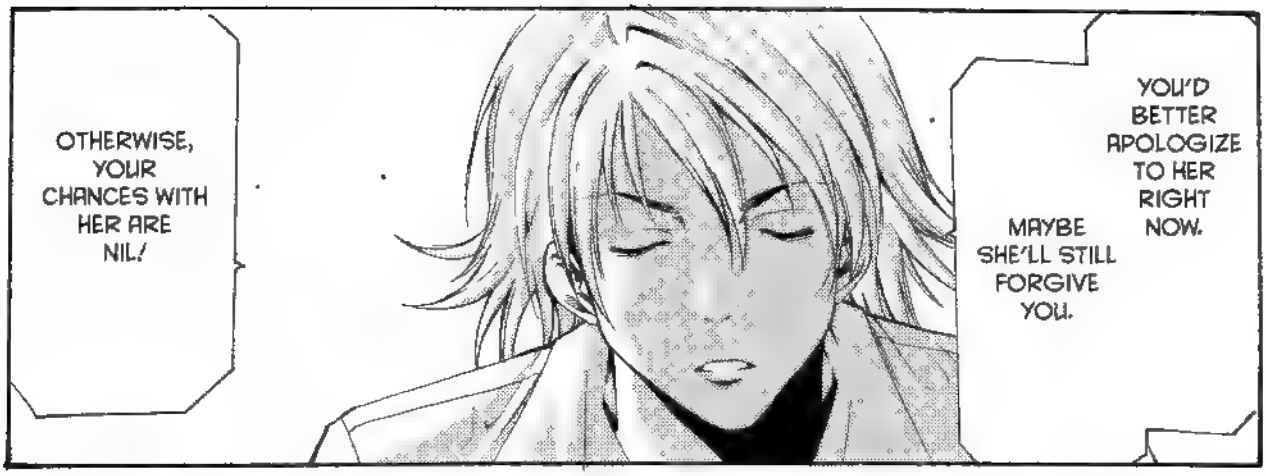
OH, BROTHER.

WHAT'S SHE SO MAD ABOUT?
.....


THAT'S WHAT THEY ALL SAY.
WHA—? IT'S NOT LIKE THAT...
JUST CALM DOWN. GEEZ, MAN, YOU'RE REALLY GOING AFTER HER.
YOU'RE PRACTICALLY A STALKER.

AH... WAIT!
HEY!
CLANK

I MEAN, THINK ABOUT IT. YOU'RE GONNA JOIN THE TEAM FOR YOUR OWN SELFISH REASONS... AND JUST KIND OF GO THROUGH THE MOTIONS.
WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT FROM HER PERSPECTIVE, THERE'S NO WAY YOU BELONG ON THE TEAM.
LOOK, YOUR REASONS FOR JOINING THE TEAM ARE ALL WRONG, AND YOU'RE TREATING IT LIKE IT'S NO BIG DEAL.
SHE REALLY TAKES IT SERIOUSLY, SO I CAN TOTALLY SEE HOW IT COULD PISS HER OFF.
BUT I'M NOT...
...JUST GONNA BE GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS.
OH REALLY?
SORRY, BUT FROM WHERE I'M SITTING, YOU SOUND LIKE YOU'RE ALL TALK.
YOU'VE BEEN GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS YOUR WHOLE LIFE...
I REALLY DON'T SEE HOW YOU COULD EVER MAKE IT ON THE TRACK TEAM.


OTHERWISE, YOUR CHANCES WITH HER ARE NIL!
MAYBE SHE'LL STILL FORGIVE YOU.
YOU'D BETTER APOLOGIZE TO HER RIGHT NOW.

.....

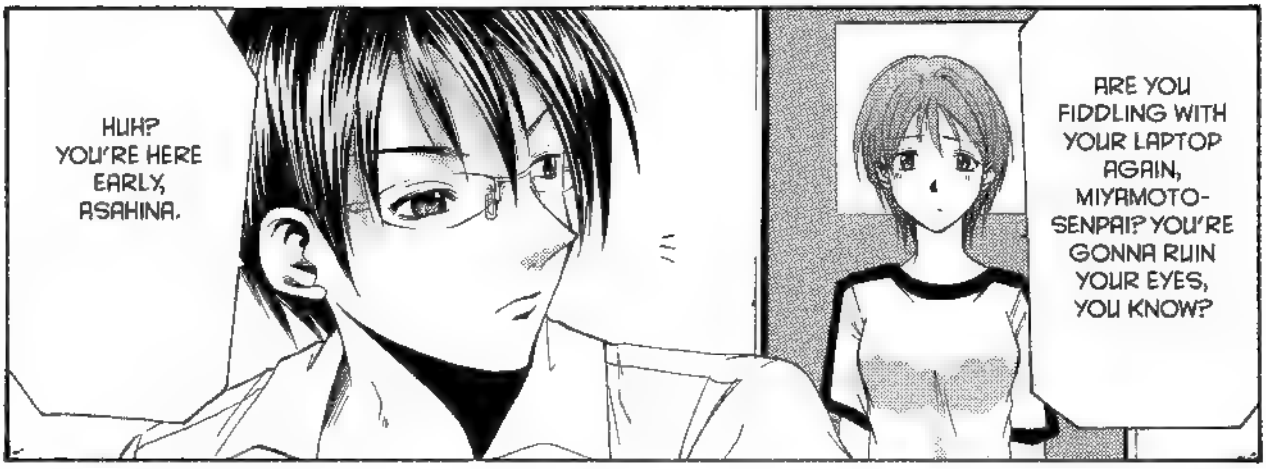
HUH? OH...
HE SAID HE WANTED TO JOIN THE TRACK TEAM, AND SUZUKA-CHAN GOT TOTALLY PISSED OFF.

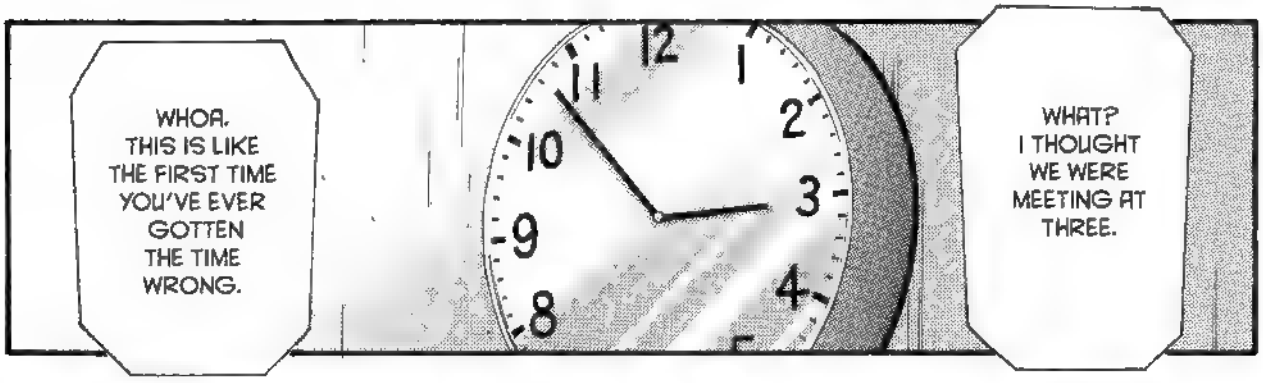
HONOKA-CHAN!
WH-WHAT'RE YOU GUYS TALKING ABOUT?
CHANCES WITH WHO?

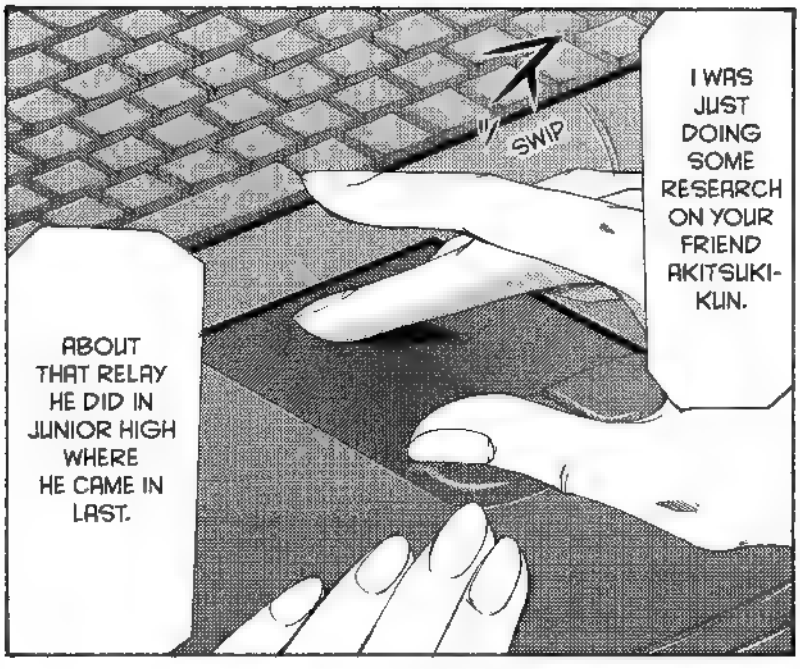
HUH?
YOU'RE JOINING THE TRACK TEAM, AKITSUKI-KUN?

I...I DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD JOIN EITHER.
I MEAN...
R-REALLY?
I KNOW, IT'S CRAZY, RIGHT?
HE COULD NEVER HANDLE IT.
P-PICKLED RADISH?
HERE, HAVE MY PICKLED RADISH.
IF YOU JOIN THE TEAM, I'LL NEVER GET TO SPEND ANY TIME WITH YOU.
...I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT.
SOUNDS LIKE I REALLY UNDERESTIMATED WHAT IT TAKES TO JOIN THE TRACK TEAM.
CRUNCH
YEAH, I'LL GO, TOO.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO APOLOGIZE TO HER IN CLASS. YOU CAN DO IT AFTER SCHOOL.
DON'T WORRY, I'LL COME WITH YOU.

MEETING ROOM
FWIP
FWAH
カタカタカタ CLACK
CLACK
CLACK
カチャ CLICK

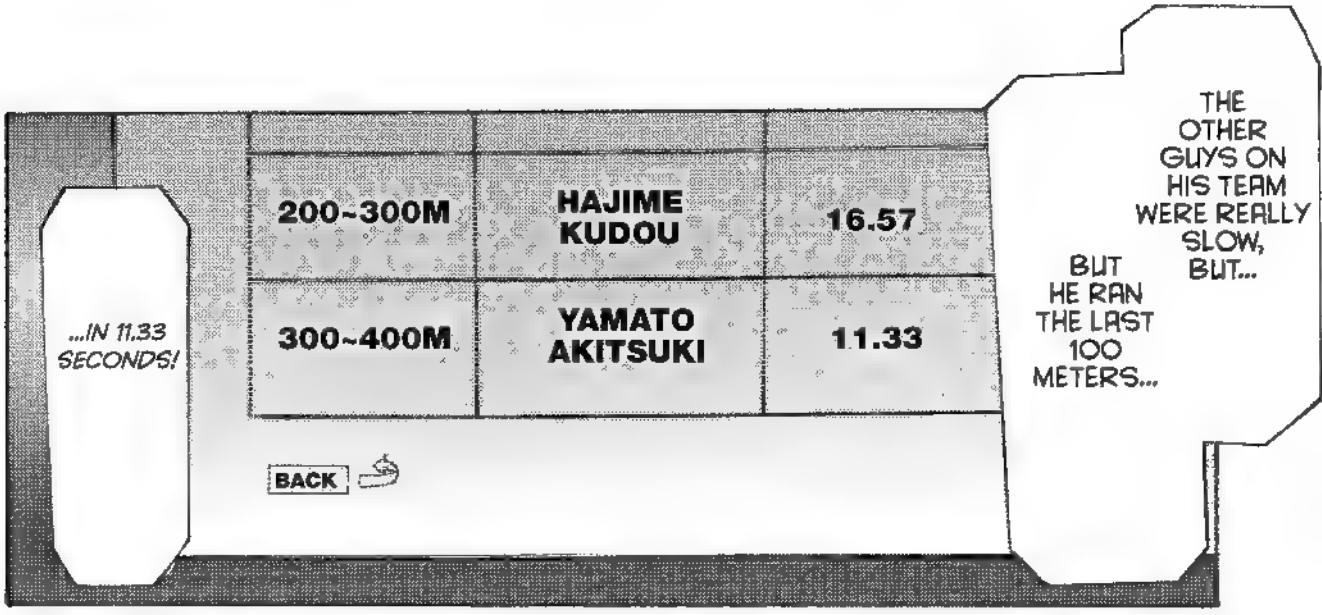

HUH? YOU'RE HERE EARLY, ASAHINA.
ARE YOU FIDDLING WITH YOUR LAPTOP AGAIN, MIYAMOTO-SENPAI? YOU'RE GONNA RUIN YOUR EYES, YOU KNOW?

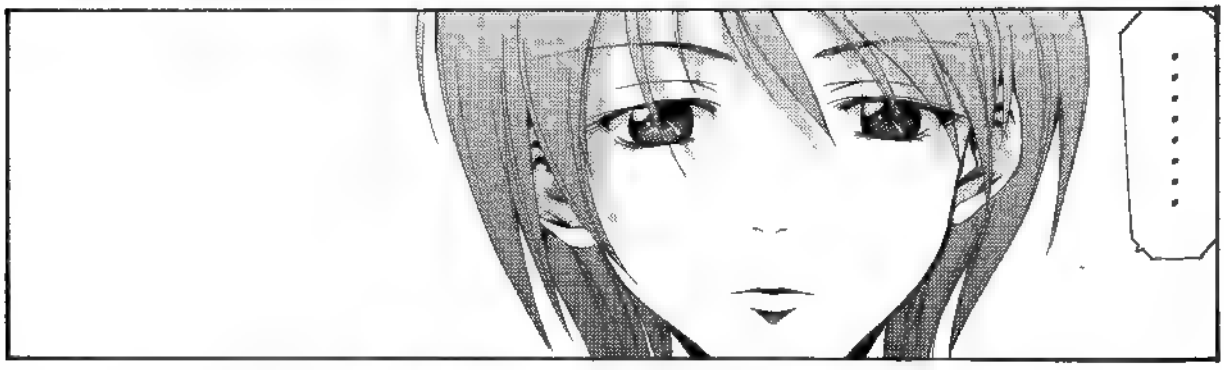

WHOA. THIS IS LIKE THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE EVER GOTTEN THE TIME WRONG.
WHAT? I THOUGHT WE WERE MEETING AT THREE.


SWIP
I WAS JUST DOING SOME RESEARCH ON YOUR FRIEND AKITSUKI-KUN.
ABOUT THAT RELAY HE DID IN JUNIOR HIGH WHERE HE CAME IN LAST.

.....
WHAT'RE YOU LOOKING AT?

TAKE A LOOK AT THIS. HE'S PRETTY AMAZING!
CREAK
REALLY?


200~300M
HAJIME KUDOU
16.57
300~400M
YAMATO AKITSUKI
11.33
BACK
...IN 11.33 SECONDS!
BUT HE RAN THE LAST 100 METERS...
THE OTHER GUYS ON HIS TEAM WERE REALLY SLOW, BUT...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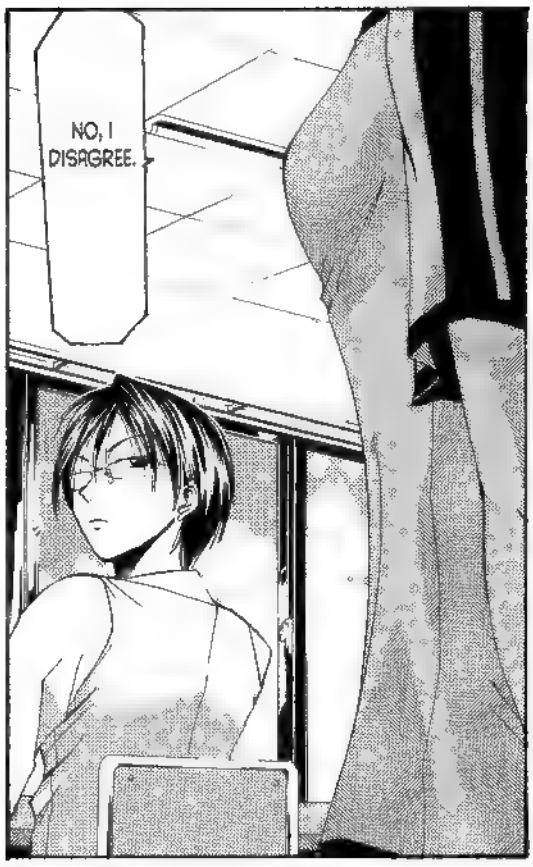
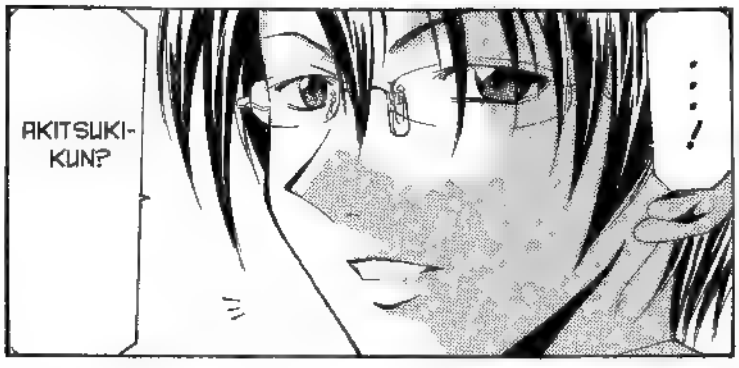

NO, I DISAGREE.

WE'VE REALLY GOTTA GET HIM ON THE TRACK TEAM.
DON'T YOU THINK?

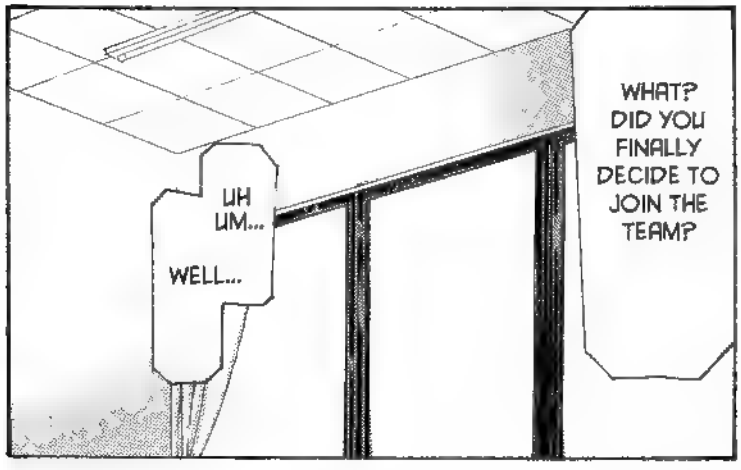
DID YOU GUYS HAVE A FIGHT OR SOME-THING?
NO, NOTHING LIKE THAT.
OKAY...
. . . . . .
I'LL COME BACK LATER.
UH-HUH...
コツ
STEP
カ
CLACK
カ
CLACK
カ
CLACK
ガチャ
CLICK

ASAHINA.
AH.

...YAMATO-KUN.


AKITSUKI-KUN?
...!

HEL..O.
OH GOOD, NO ONE ELSE IS HERE.
WHAT'S WRONG? WHAT'RE YOU GUYS DOING HERE?


UH UM... WELL...
WHAT? DID YOU FINALLY DECIDE TO JOIN THE TEAM?

UH...
OKAY.
コツ
STEP
THAT'S ENOUGH. I CAN APOLOGIZE MYSELF.
NO, SENPAI.
THAT'S NOT WHY HE'S HERE.
.....
.....
.....

SWIP
ON SECOND THOUGHT...

HUH?

SENPAI...
SO WHAT IF I UNDERESTIMATED WHAT IT TAKES TO BE ON THE TEAM...

YOU TALKING TO ME?
HUH?

...I STILL WANNA BE BY ASAHINA'S SIDE!
SIGN ME UP FOR THE TEAM.
...!
HUH?
HUH?

SUZUKA FOUR-PANEL THEATER NUMBER TEN
THAT BOTTLE OF SAKE

ALL RIGHT, EVERYBODY! GATHER 'ROUND!
CHATTER
CHATTER

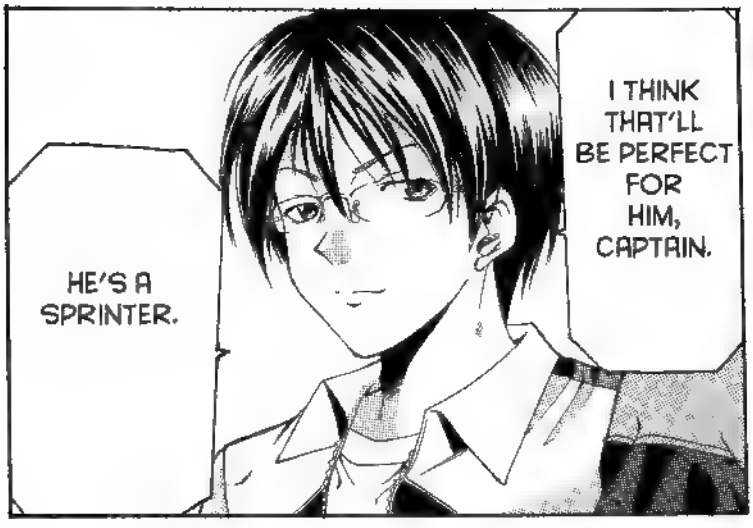
BEFORE WE START TODAY'S PRACTICE...
I WANT TO INTRODUCE A NEW MEMBER.

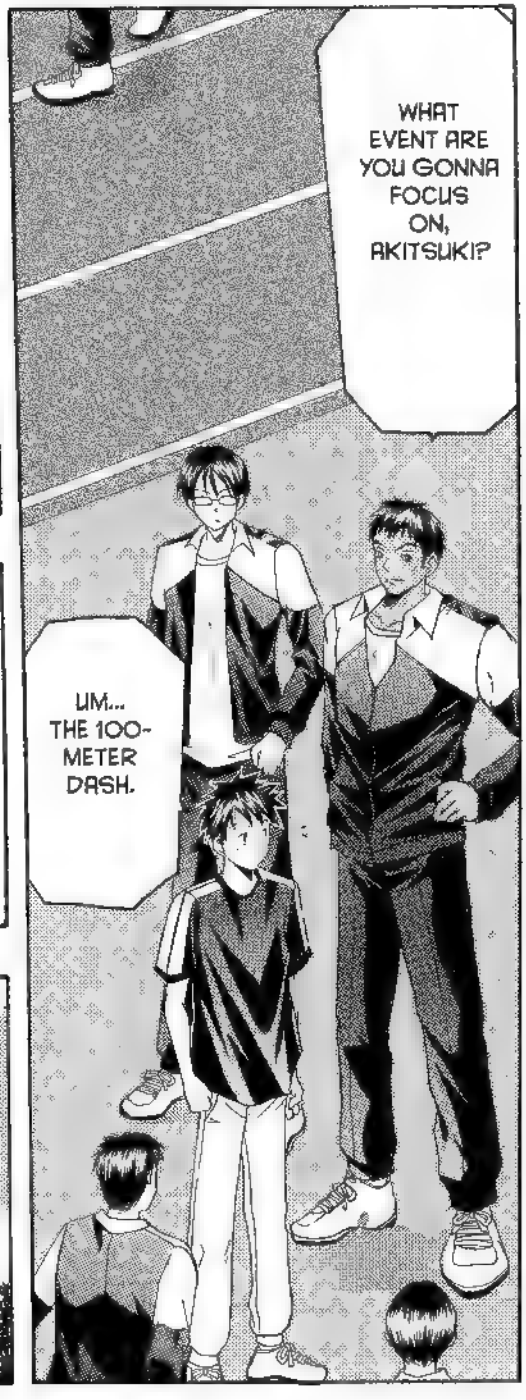
HE REALLY DID JOIN THE TEAM.
YEAH, HE SURE DID.
I NEVER THOUGHT HE'D JUST WALK IN AND SIGN UP ON HIS OWN.

SUZUKA

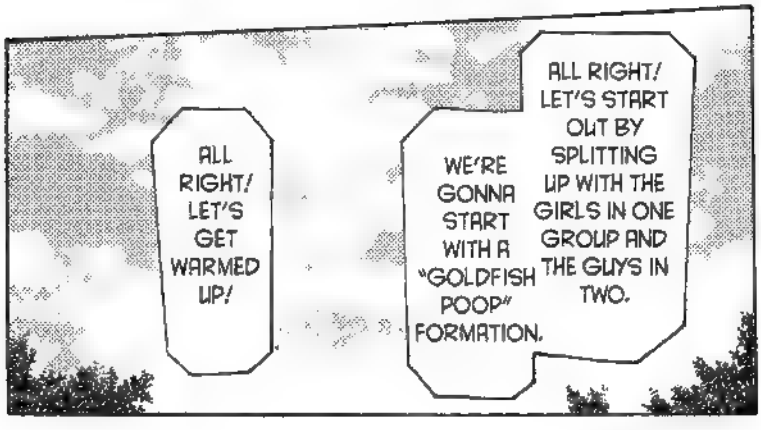
#16 Distance

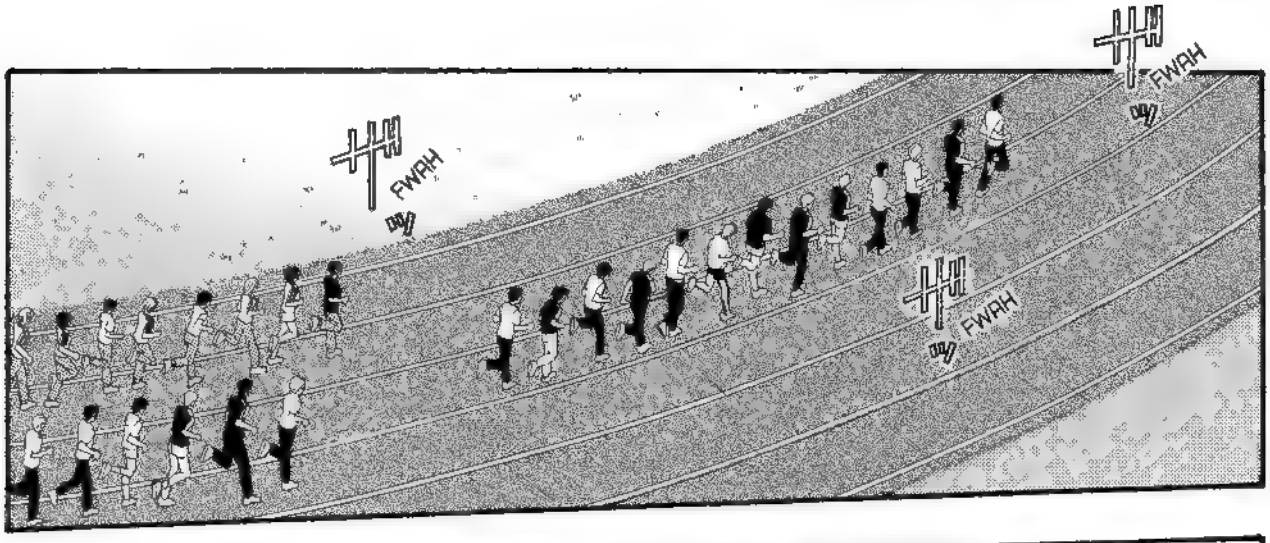
TRACK SCHOLARSHIP STUDENT KENJI KOBAYASHI-KUN
DID YOU REALLY BEAT KOBAYA-KAWA?
CHATTER
HEH.
CHATTER
ALL RIGHT! WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, AKITSUKI!
YOU WERE AMAZING THE OTHER DAY!

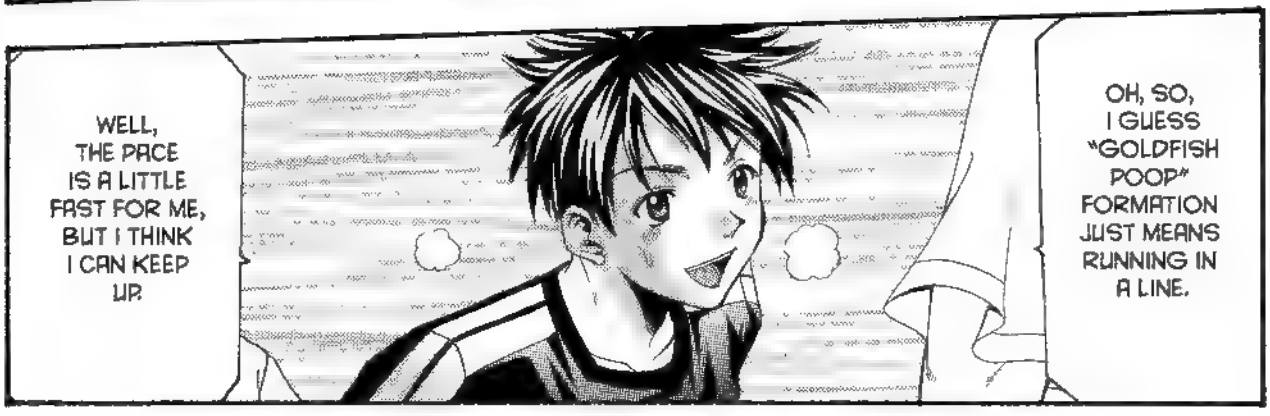

HE'S A SPRINTER.
I THINK THAT'LL BE PERFECT FOR HIM, CAPTAIN.


WHAT EVENT ARE YOU GONNA FOCUS ON, AKITSUKI?
UM... THE 100-METER DASH.

I'LL GIVE IT MY ALL!
THANK YOU!


ALL RIGHT! LET'S GET WARMED UP!
WE'RE GONNA START WITH A "GOLDFISH POOP" FORMATION.
ALL RIGHT! LET'S START OUT BY SPLITTING UP WITH THE GIRLS IN ONE GROUP AND THE GUYS IN TWO.


FWAH
FWAH
FWAH


WELL, THE PACE IS A LITTLE FAST FOR ME, BUT I THINK I CAN KEEP UP.
OH, SO, I GUESS "GOLDFISH POOP" FORMATION JUST MEANS RUNNING IN A LINE.

WE'LL SEE.
HAHH
HAHH
HAHH
.....

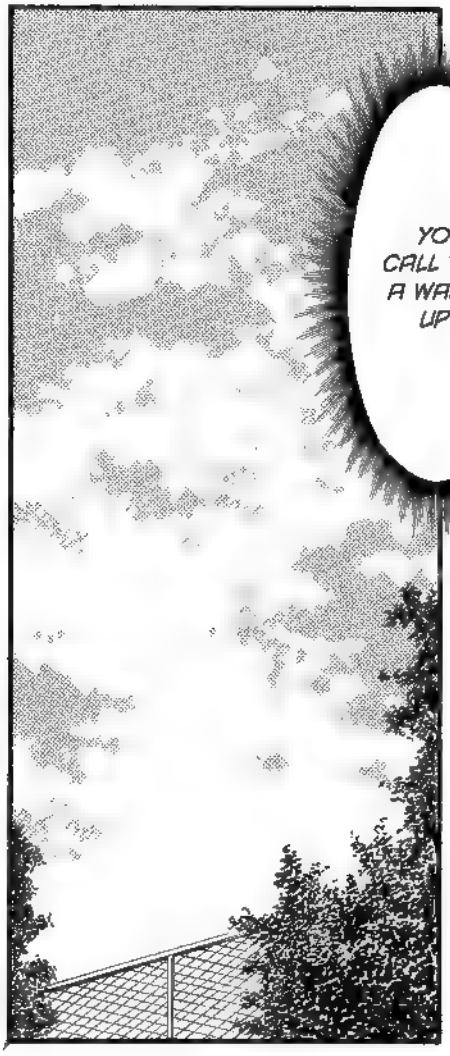
HEY, MIYAMOTO-SENPAI. HOW MANY LAPS ARE WE GONNA RUN?

FWOOSH
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

HUH?
WHA-?
IS THE PERSON IN THE BACK SUPPOSED TO SPRINT ALL THE WAY UP TO THE FRONT?
FWOOSH
YOU'RE NEXT, AKITSUKI-KUN.
UH, OKAY.
ARE YOU KIDDING? THERE'RE LIKE FIFTEEN GUYS AHEAD OF ME.

SHIT! I CAN'T CATCH UP TO THE FRONT OF THE LINE!
THEY'RE RUNNING WAY TOO FAST!

HAAH
HAAH


YOU CALL THIS A WARM-UP?

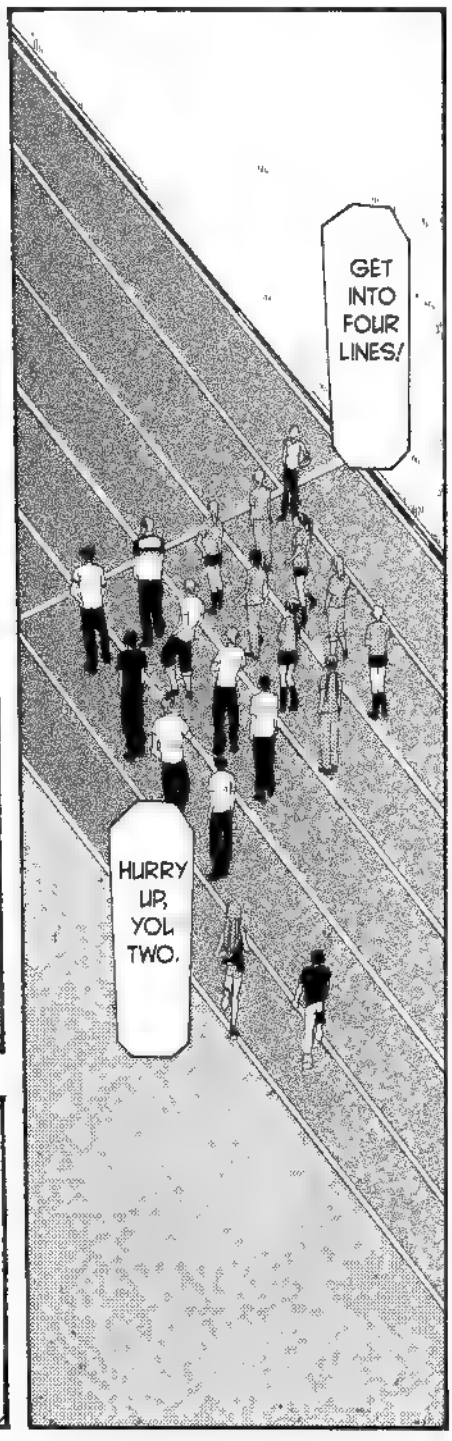
I-I ENDED UP DOING TEN DASHES.
I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY LAPS I DID.

ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?
WHY DOES EVERYBODY ELSE LOOK SO RELAXED?
SHIT.
HUH?
YOU'RE SLOWING DOWN YOUR WHOLE GROUP!
IT'S BECAUSE YOU KEEP BABBLING WHILE YOU RUN. YOU HAVE NO FOCUS.
I TOLD YOU, YOU DIDN'T BELONG ON THE TEAM.
STOP WEIGHING US DOWN.
AH... SUZUKI?
STEP

SHE'S EXTRA HARD ON YOU, AKITSUKI!
UH... YEAH.
OH, I'M MIKI HASHIBA.
I'M A FRESHMAN.
I HEARD ALL ABOUT YOU FROM SUZUKA.
F-FROM ASAHINA? ARE YOU FRIENDS?
NOW WE ALL SPLIT UP AND FOCUS ON OUR SPECIALTIES. I'M A SPRINTER, TOO.
COME ON, LET'S GO!

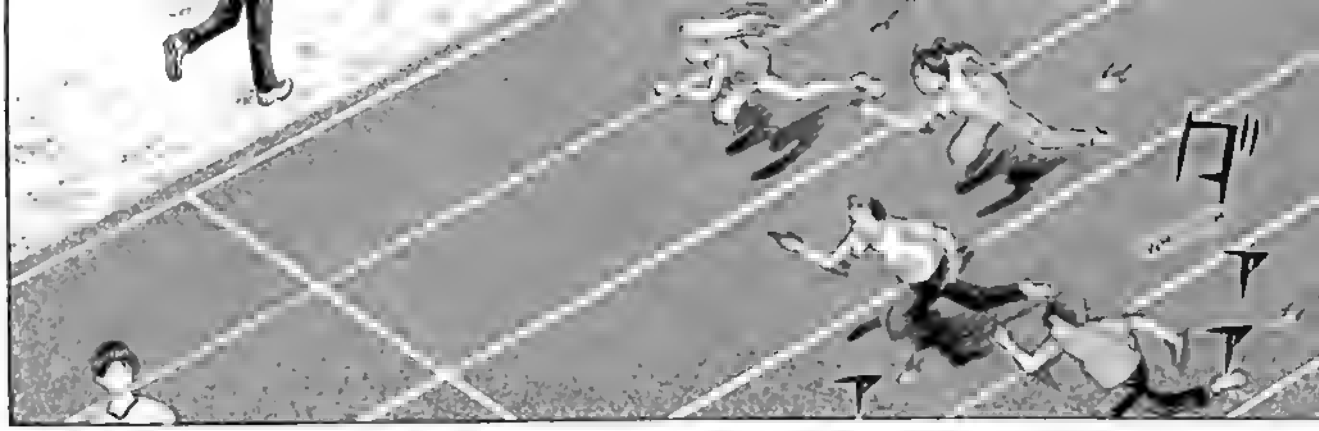
H-HANG ON...
LET ME REST FOR A SECOND...
WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WE JUST STARTED.

NOW WHAT?
ミシキ
THUMP
ミシキ
THUMP


GET INTO FOUR LINES!
HURRY UP, YOU TWO.

WE'RE GONNA DO FOUR SETS OF 50-METER INTERVALS, WITH FIVE DASHES PER SET.
YES, SIR!

HMM... THAT SOUNDS PRETTY FUN.
I THINK I CAN HANDLE THAT.



O-OKAY.
PICK UP THE PACE, AKITSUKI! WE'RE ONLY HALFWAY THERE!
OKAY, LET'S START ON THE THIRD SET!

THE TRACK TEAM ISN'T ALL FUN AND GAMES, YOU KNOW?
THE WHOLE TEAM SPENDS DAY AFTER DAY AT PRACTICE TRYING TO BEAT THEIR RECORD BY AN EXTRA SECOND...OR AN EXTRA CENTIMETER.

MY STOMACH IS CRAMPING UP...
HAH-
HAH-
WITH ONLY FOUR LINES OF RUNNERS, THERE'S NO TIME TO CATCH MY BREATH.

.....
DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN HANDLE IT, YAMATO-KUN?

ALL RIGHT, NEXT!
FWUMP
FWISH
HAHH
WHOA...
AFTER ALL THAT RUNNING, SHE CAN STILL CLEAR THE BAR...

COOLDOWN= STRETCHING

FWOOSH
A-ASAHINA!
WOW, SUZUKA SURE TRAINS HARD.
FWIPPA
SH-SHE'S STILL PRACTICING?
HASHIBA...

SHE WAS ALWAYS A PERFECTIONIST. SHE NEVER LOST HER COOL, SHE'D JUST GO OUT THERE AND WIN.
...WHENEVER SHE WON, SHE ALWAYS HAD THIS STONE-COLD LOOK ON HER FACE. SHE DIDN'T EVEN CRACK A SMILE.
WE WENT TO DIFFERENT JUNIOR HIGHS, BUT WE USED TO SEE EACH OTHER AT TRACK MEETS.
I HATED HER.
WOULDN'T THAT PISS YOU OFF?
SHE HASN'T REACHED HER GOAL YET, SO WINNING DOESN'T REALLY MEAN ANYTHING TO HER.
THE REASON SHE NEVER SMILES IS THAT SHE SETS THESE REALLY HIGH GOALS FOR HERSELF...
BUT WHEN WE STARTED GOING TO THE SAME SCHOOL, I REALIZED...
UH... YOU DID?
WINNING DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING TO HER?
I'VE GROWN TO REALLY RESPECT SUZUKA.
SO NOW...
OH, SO THEY HATE EACH OTHER...

SHE'S HERE ON A TRACK SCHOLARSHIP SO
EVERYBODY RESPECTS HER EVEN AFTER A HARD DAY OF PRACTICE. SHE STAYS OUT HERE AND TRAINS ALL BY HERSELF

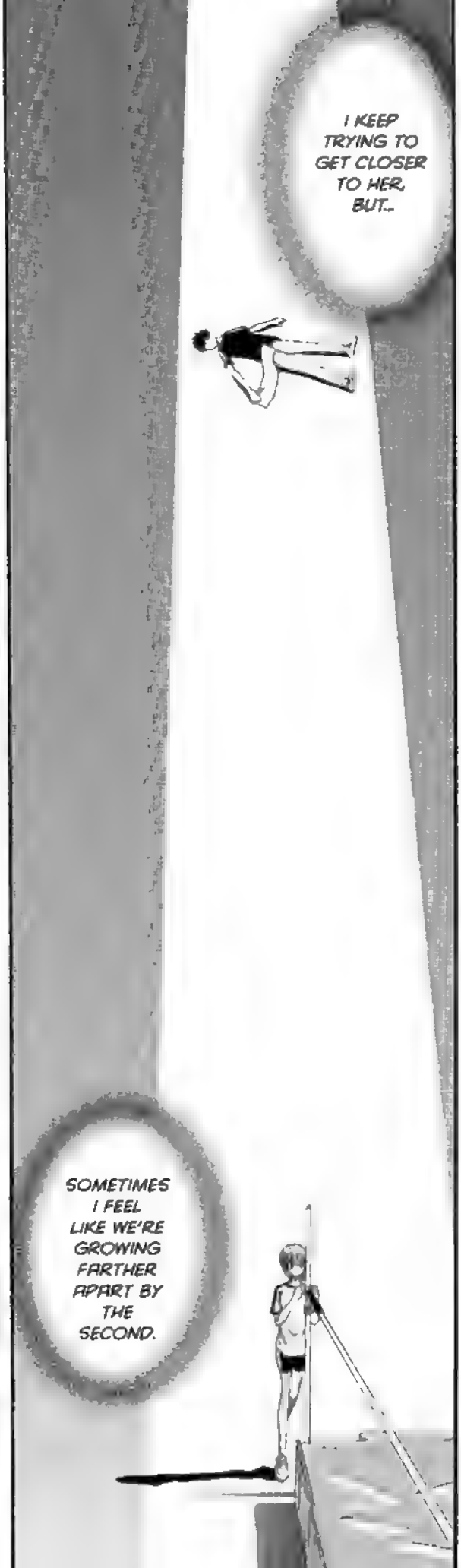
ギュ
...SHIT... SHE'S SO COOL.

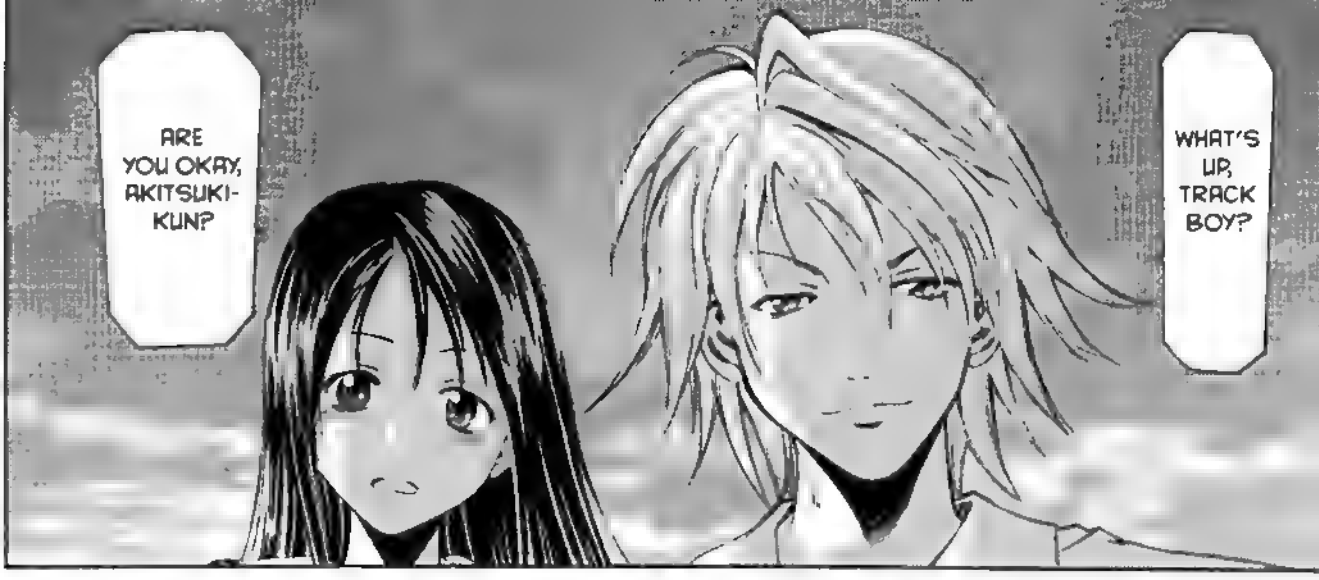
MAN...
.....

I'M GONNA HANG OUT WITH SUZUKA FOR A WHILE.
WHY DON'T YOU HEAD HOME, AKITSUKI.
.....

YEAH... I'D LOVE TO GO HOME, BUT...
I CAN'T EVEN MOVE

HEY, WE'RE HERE TO PICK UP YAMATO AKITSUKI.
...HUH?

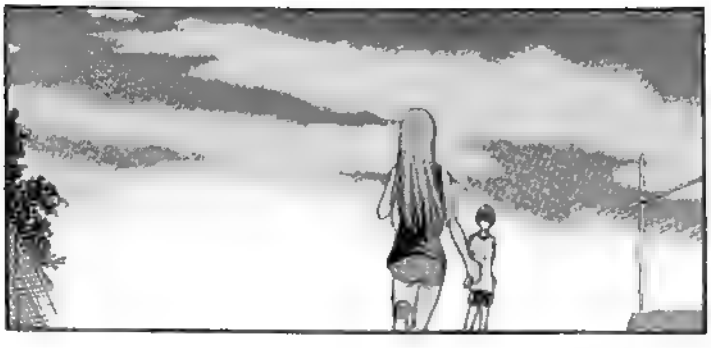

I KEEP TRYING TO GET CLOSER TO HER, BUT...
SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE WE'RE GROWING FARTHER APART BY THE SECOND.


ARE YOU OKAY, AKITSUKI-KUN?
WHAT'S UP, TRACK BOY?

WHAT'RE YOU GUYS DOING HERE?
YASUNOBU... HONOKA-CHAN...

HEY, MIKI! WILL YOU WATCH THIS JUMP AND SEE IF MY FORM'S OKAY?

THANKS
WELL, TAKE CARE.



WE FIGURED YOU'D END UP LIKE THIS, SO WE WAITED FOR TYOU.
YOU OWE US ONE.
AH! I'LL HELP YOU LIFT HIM
.....

SO, HOW WAS IT?
ASAKINA.
GEEZ, MAN...
OKAY, MAYBE I DID SOUND LIKE A GROUPIE, BUT...
I COULDN'T THINK OF ANY OTHER WAY TO PUT IT.

I WENT BACK TO MY FAMILY'S HOUSE THE OTHER DAY.
HEY THERE, MR. MANGA!
HAVE A DRINK!
OUR NEIGHBOR MR. KOTSUGI WAS VISITING.
HE WAS ALREADY PRETTY TIPSY.

SUZUKA FOUR-PANEL THEATER NUMBER ELEVEN
MR. KOTSUGI

JUST SHOW ME OUT THERE, DOING WHAT I DO!
IN THE WINTER, YOU COULD PUT ME IN A TRACTOR, SHOVELING SNOW.
AND IN THE SUMMER, YOU COULD HAVE ME TRIMMING BRUSH.

HE PROBABLY WOULD BE A GOOD CHARACTER, BUT...
I JUST CAN'T IMAGINE A TRACTOR IN A SUZUKA SCENE.
REALLY, YOU CAN JUST STICK ME IN ANYWHERE.
DON'T YOU THINK I'D MAKE A GOOD CHARACTER?

WOO
WOO
HAHH
HAHH
WHY DO YOU TRY SO HARD, AKITSUKI-KUN?
HE LOOKS EXHAUSTED

#17 Unrequited Love

SUZUKA

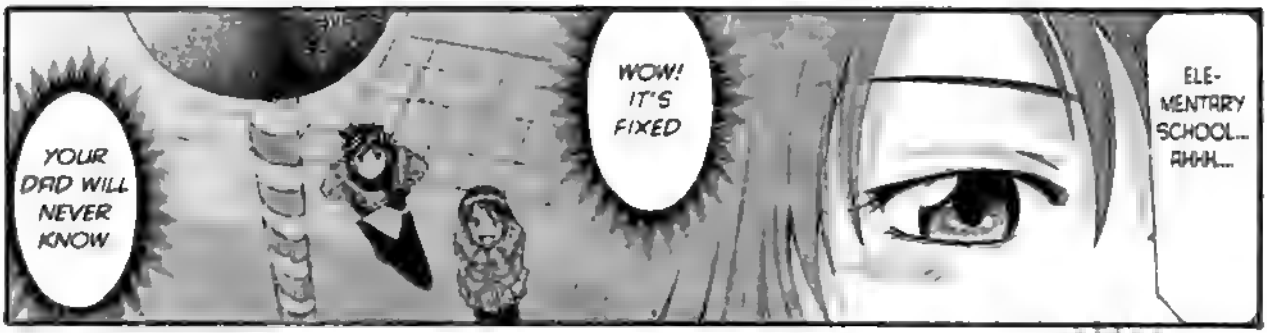
I KNOW, HE'S BEEN RUNNING NONSTOP FOR A WHOLE WEEK NOW.
カシャ SHWINK
WOW... DAY AFTER DAY... NEVER MISSING A MOMENT...
HUH? YOU'RE STILL WATCHING THEM PRACTICE, SAKURAI?
HATTORI-KUN...
HUH? M-ME?
NO, I'M TALKING ABOUT YOU.
...THEN AGAIN, YOU'RE SUCH A KLUTZ, YOU'D PROBABLY NEVER EVEN MAKE THE TEAM.
HUH?
EVERY DAY AFTER SCHOOL YOU'RE OUT HERE, STARING OFF INTO SPACE...
IF YOU'RE SO WORRIED ABOUT YAMATO, THEN WHY DON'T YOU JOIN THE TRACK TEAM?
.....

IF YOU'RE SO WORRIED ABOUT YAMATO...
...THEN WHY DON'T YOU JOIN THE TRACK TEAM?

...THEN AGAIN, YOU'RE SUCH A KLUTZ, YOU'D PROBABLY NEVER EVEN MAKE THE TEAM
WHAT DOES HE KNOW?

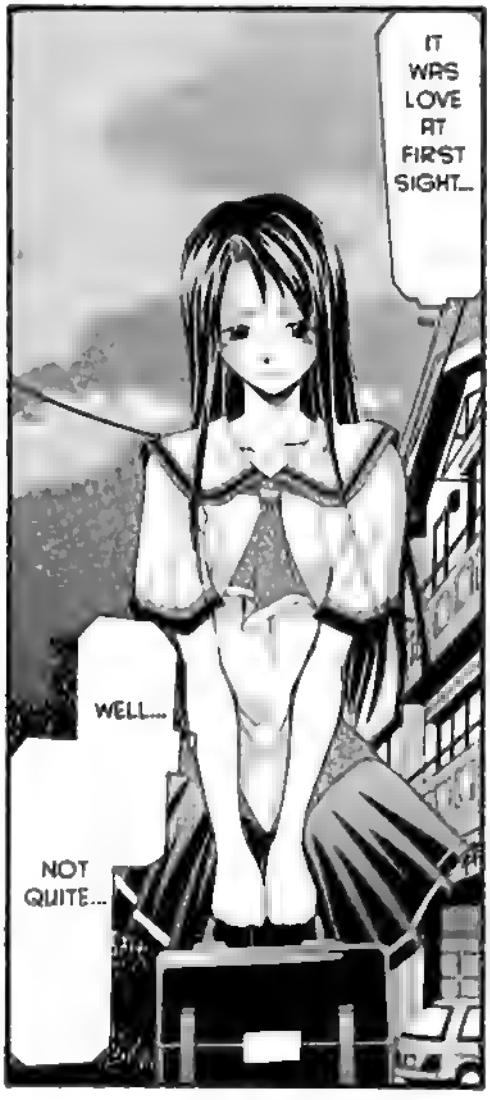
FWUP

I MEAN, IF I PUT MY MIND TO IT...
FWOOSH
WOO
WOO
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL KIDS
9"
9"
9"
FWOOSH
. . . . . !
KIDS THESE DAYS SURE ARE FAST.
PANT
HAHH
PANT
WOO
WOO
DO YOU THINK WE'LL GET THE RARE CARD TODAY?
I WIN!
3 9 PANT
3 9 PANT
CHATTER
CHATTER
Coca-Cola


ELE-
MENTARY
SCHOOL...
AHHH...
WOW!
IT'S
FIXED
YOUR
DAD WILL
NEVER
KNOW

LISTEN...
THIS IS
GONNA BE
OUR LITTLE
SECRET. JUST
BETWEEN ME
AND YOU,
OKAY?

21-4
EVERY
TIME
AKITSUKI-
KUN
CAME TO
OUR
SHRINE...
I ALWAYS
TOLD MYSELF
THAT THIS YEAR
I'D FINALLY
WORK UP
THE COURAGE
TO TALK TO
HIM AGAIN,
BUT...

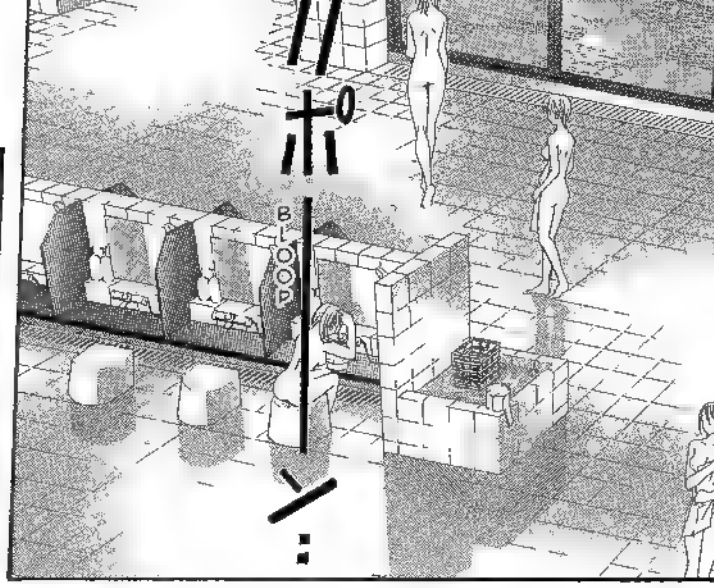

IT
WAS
LOVE
AT
FIRST
SIGHT...
WELL...
NOT
QUITE...

GORO-
CHAN...

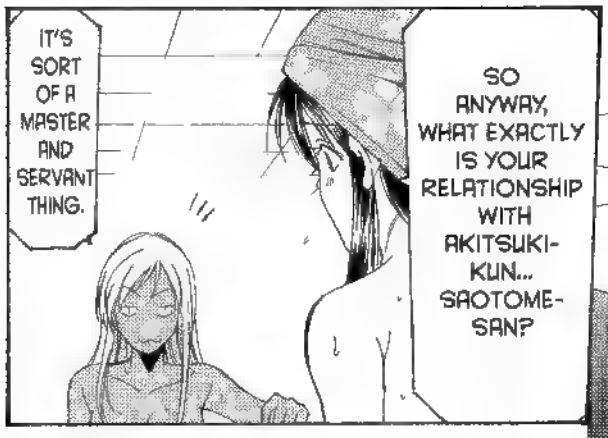
MEOW

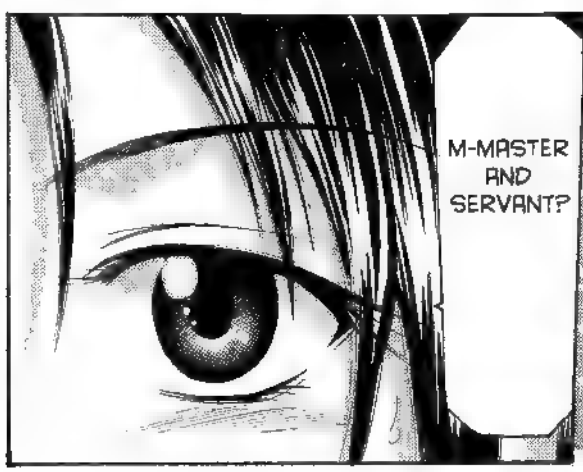
IF I WERE A CAT, I COULD BE AROUND AKITSUKI-KUN ALL THE TIME... JUST LIKE YOU...
OUT FOR A WALK?
YOUR NOSE IS ALL DIRTY.
MEOOOW
.....?
I USED TO WATCH HIM SITTING THERE, EATING CRO-QUETTES ON THE SHRINE STEPS...
AND THINKING ABOUT HOW WONDERFUL THAT WOULD BE...
...WISHING THAT SOMEDAY I'D BE SITTING BESIDE HIM.
EH? SO YOU LIKE YAMATO-KUN, HONOKA-CHAN?
HUH?
SHOCK
SHIVER
I'D BE HAPPY TO GIVE YOU SOME ADVICE...
F YOU WANT?

WHY DO WE HAVE TO DO THIS IN THE BATH?
UH... UM...

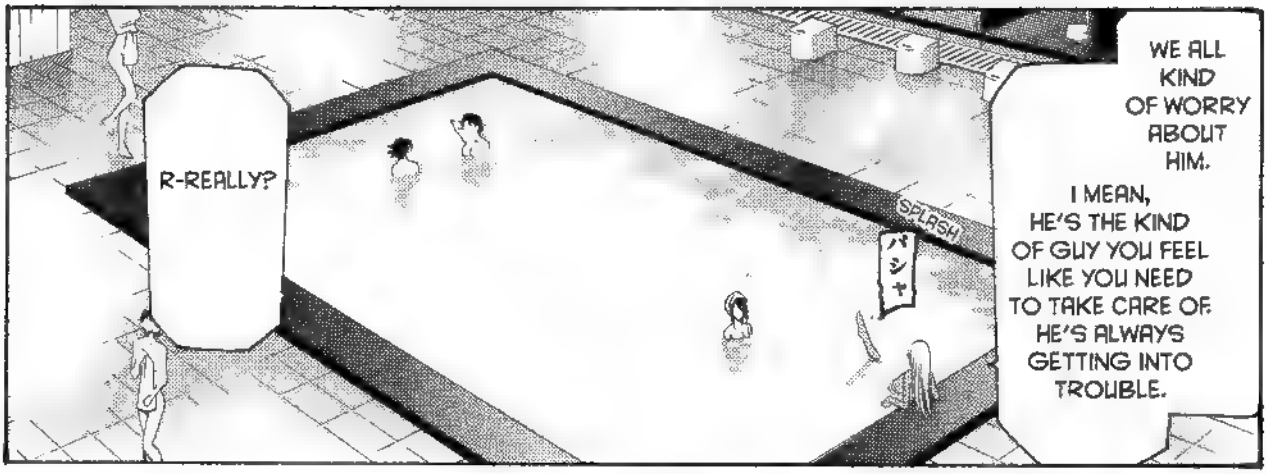

BLOOD

DON'T WORRY. YOU'LL FIGURE IT OUT SOON ENOUGH.
UH...I REALLY DON'T GET WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...


IT'S SORT OF A MASTER AND SERVANT THING.
SO ANYWAY, WHAT EXACTLY IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH AKITSUKI-KUN... SAOTOME-SAN?


M-MASTER AND SERVANT?

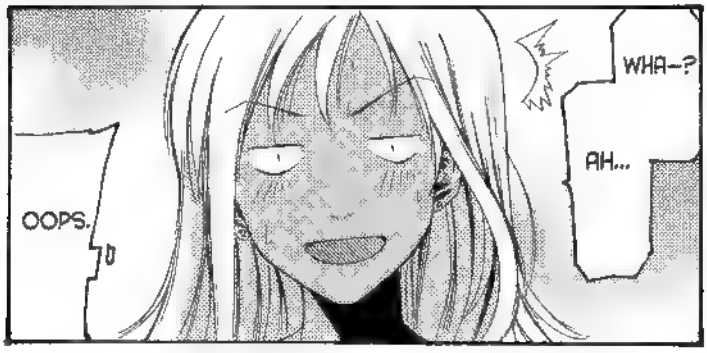
BECAUSE IF YOU WANNA SEE SOMEONE FOR WHO THEY REALLY ARE, YOU'VE GOTTA GET NAKED WITH THEM.
ESPECIALLY WITH GUYS! I MEAN, ONCE YOU SCREW A GUY, YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT KIND OF PERSON HE IS.

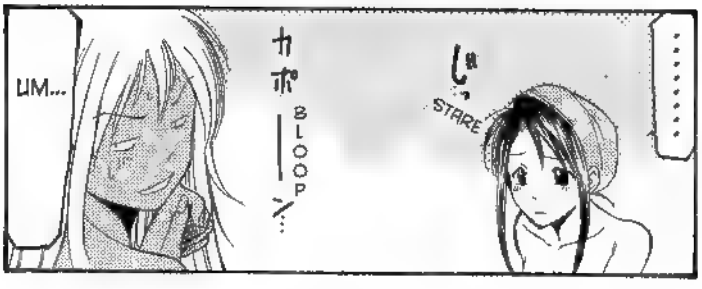

R-REALLY?
SPLASH
バシャ
WE ALL KIND OF WORRY ABOUT HIM.
I MEAN, HE'S THE KIND OF GUY YOU FEEL LIKE YOU NEED TO TAKE CARE OF. HE'S ALWAYS GETTING INTO TROUBLE.

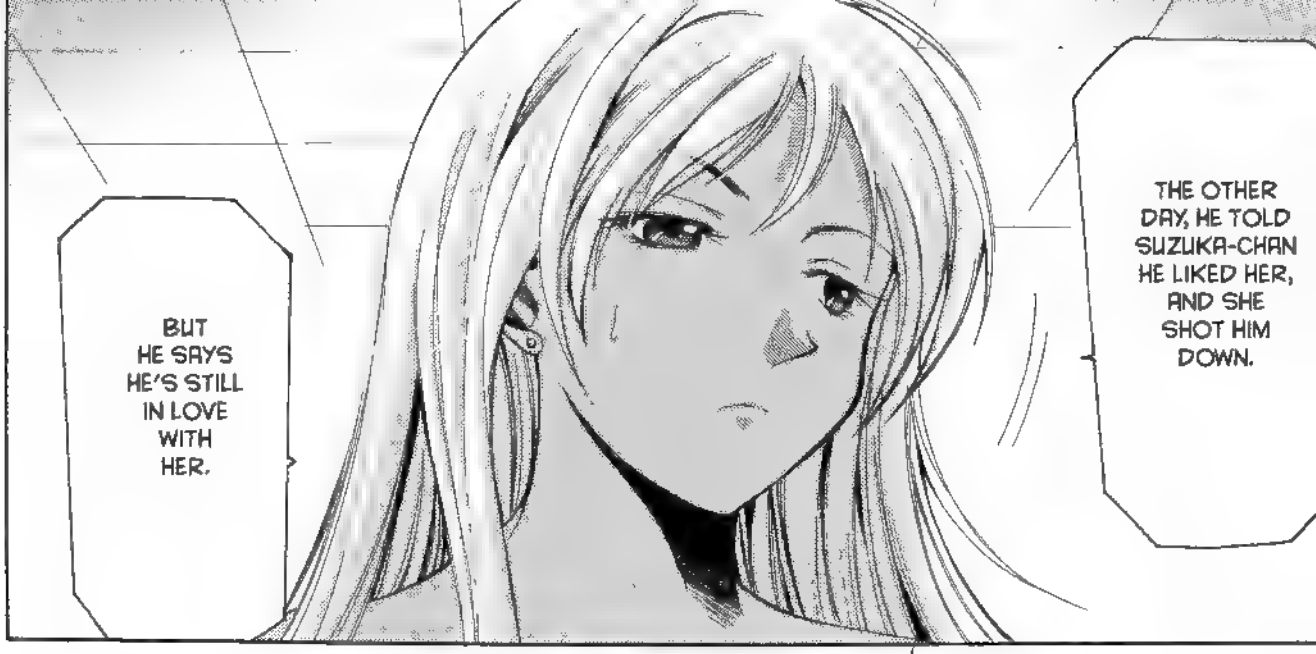
HE SEEMS LIKE THE KIND OF GUY YOU CAN REALLY DEPEND ON.
BUT HE'S SO SWEET...AND SO EASY TO TALK TO...

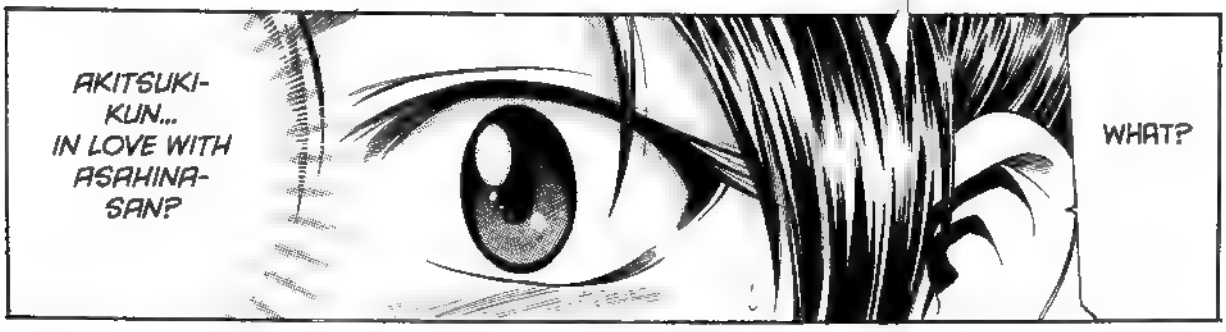
SHOT DOWN? BY WHO?
HUH?

WHAT?
HE GETS SHOT DOWN ONCE, AND STARTS LIMPING AROUND LIKE A WOUNDED DEER. WHAT'S DEPENDABLE ABOUT THAT?


WHA-?
AH...
OOPS.

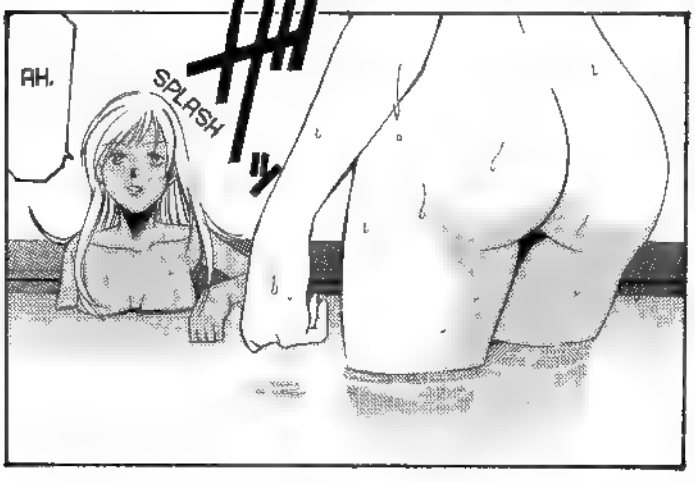

UM...
ガヤ
BLOOP
STARE
.....


THE OTHER DAY, HE TOLD SUZUKA-CHAN HE LIKED HER, AND SHE SHOT HIM DOWN.
BUT HE SAYS HE'S STILL IN LOVE WITH HER.


AKITSUKI-KUN... IN LOVE WITH ASAHINA-SAN?
WHAT?

AKITSUKI-KUN LIKES ASAHINA-SAN...

HE WAS, LIKE, "I'LL NEVER GIVE UP!" AND HE JOINED THE TRACK TEAM, BUT...
DON'T YOU WORRY. I'M SURE YOUR DAY WILL COME.

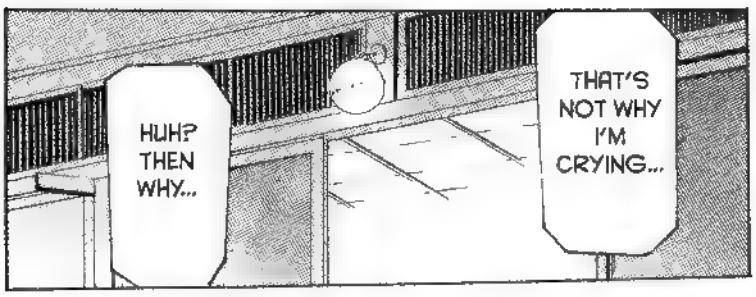

AH.
SPLASH

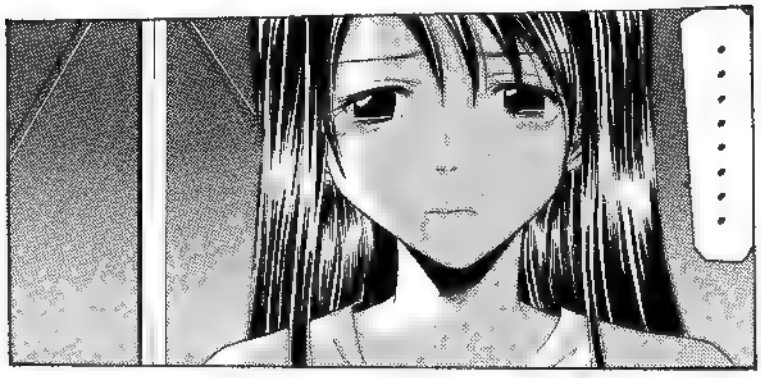
IT'S NOT MY FAULT.
WELL... SHE WAS GONNA HEAR ABOUT IT SOONER OR LATER ANYWAY
FWOOSH
HEY, HONOKA-CHAN.
...HE'S BEEN TRYING SO HARD...
SO THAT'S WHY...
I MEAN, I'M NO IDIOT...
NOW I GET IT.
I'LL BE FINE.
I'M NOT GONNA CRY...I'M NOT!
WRONG DOOR-
AH...HEY, HONOKA-CHAN.

……

ASAHIYU
BATHS

I-I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T SEE ANYTHING. I SWEAR THE STEAM COVERED EVERYTHING UP!
SNIFF
SNIFF
WAH.


HUH? THEN WHY...
THAT'S NOT WHY I'M CRYING...


.....

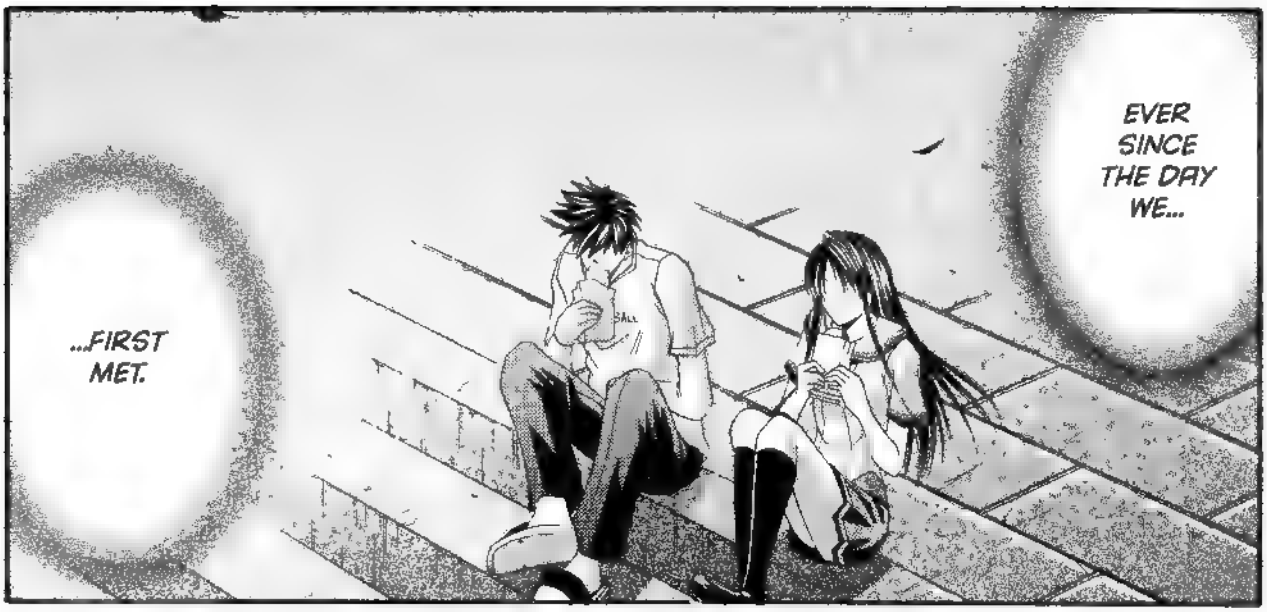
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
OH, SHIT...

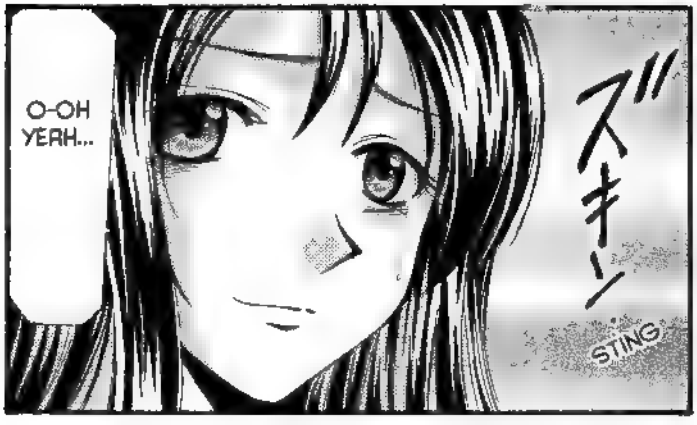
NO...

I'M FINE. I'M FINE. DON'T WORRY. I'M USED TO IT NOW.
N-NO, YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THAT. I KNOW YOU'RE EXHAUSTED FROM ALL THAT RUNNING, AND—
WELL, I'D BETTER WALK YOU HOME. IT'S PRETTY LATE.
カラン FLOP
カラン FLIP
...SURE.
THEN DO YOU MIND IF I MAKE A QUICK LITTLE STOP? AT THE CONVENIENCE STORE?
...OKAY.
HE JOINED THE TEAM BECAUSE OF ASAHINA-SAN...

WHAT DID YOU BUY?
カラン
KLIP
HUH? OH... JUST SOME STUFF...
カラン
KLIP
カサッ
RUSTLE
イリー
マザキ
IS IT OKAY IF I SIT DOWN?
HUH? BUT WE'RE HERE...
HERE.
カサ
HUH?

I REMEMBER YOU SAYING YOU LIKED TO...
...EAT THEM HERE.
IT'S A MEAT AND POTATO CRO-QUETTE.
OF COURSE, THAT'S WHY I BOUGHT TWO.
EH... Y-YEAH, BUT...CAN I REALLY HAVE IT?
BASKETBALL
THIS S REALLY GOOD
CRUNCH
OH! THANKS.
GRIN
ACTUALLY, I'M TOTALLY STARVING!
BASKETBALL
I'M SO HAPPY...
I'VE WANTED TO DO THIS FOR SO LONG.


EVER SINCE THE DAY WE...
...FIRST MET.


O-OH YEAH...
ズキーン
STING

HIS MIND IS STILL ON ASAHINA-SAN...
I FINALLY GET TO BE ALONE WITH HIM, BUT...

HUH?
HEY!
FWIP
BALL

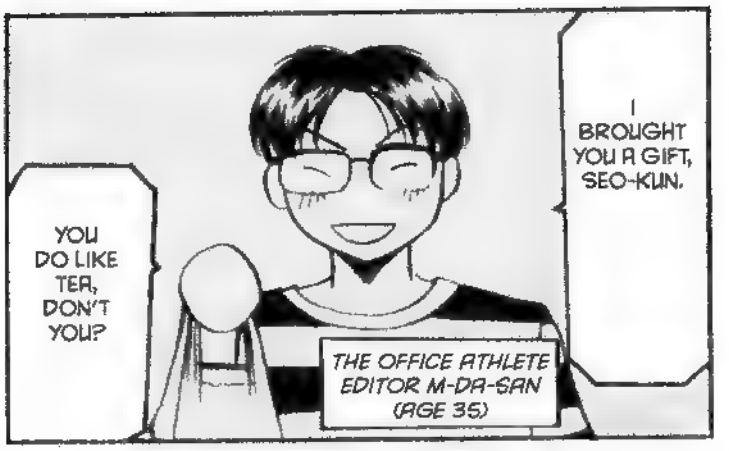
I TRIED TELLING ASAHINA HOW GOOD THESE WERE, BUT SHE DIDN'T BELIEVE ME.
SHE'S MISSING OUT.

I'M THINKING OF JOINING THE TRACK TEAM, TOO!
WELL, I'M NOT GIVING UP EITHER!
WHAT?
YOU ARE?
UM...
WELL, I DON'T REALLY HAVE ANYTHING ELSE TO DO, AND...I JUST WANT TO GIVE IT A TRY.
YEAH... IF I CAN MAKE THE TEAM..
I'M SURE YOU'LL MAKE THE TEAM, BUT... WHY DO YOU WANNA JOIN?

COOL, BUT...IT'S REALLY HARD, YOU KNOW?
HONOKO-CHAN SURE SEEMS EXCITED ABOUT THIS...

I'LL DO ANYTHING...
DON'T WORRY.

IF IT MEANS...
...BEING CLOSER TO YOU...



SUZUKA FOUR-PANEL THEATER NUMBER TWELVE
SPRING TEA

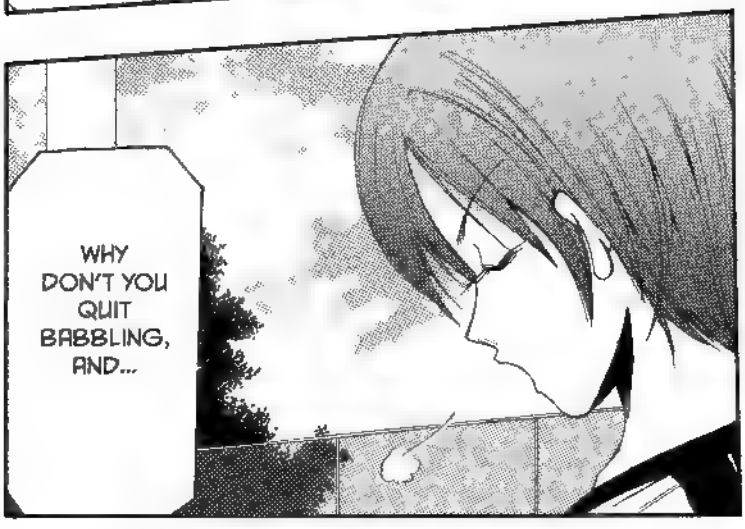
SUZUKA

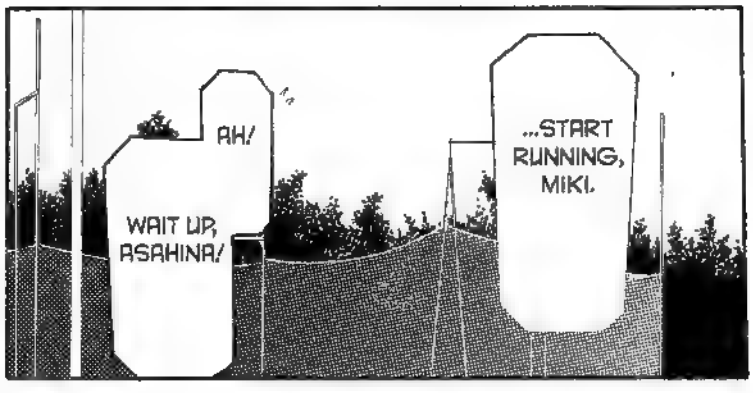
#18 Obsession

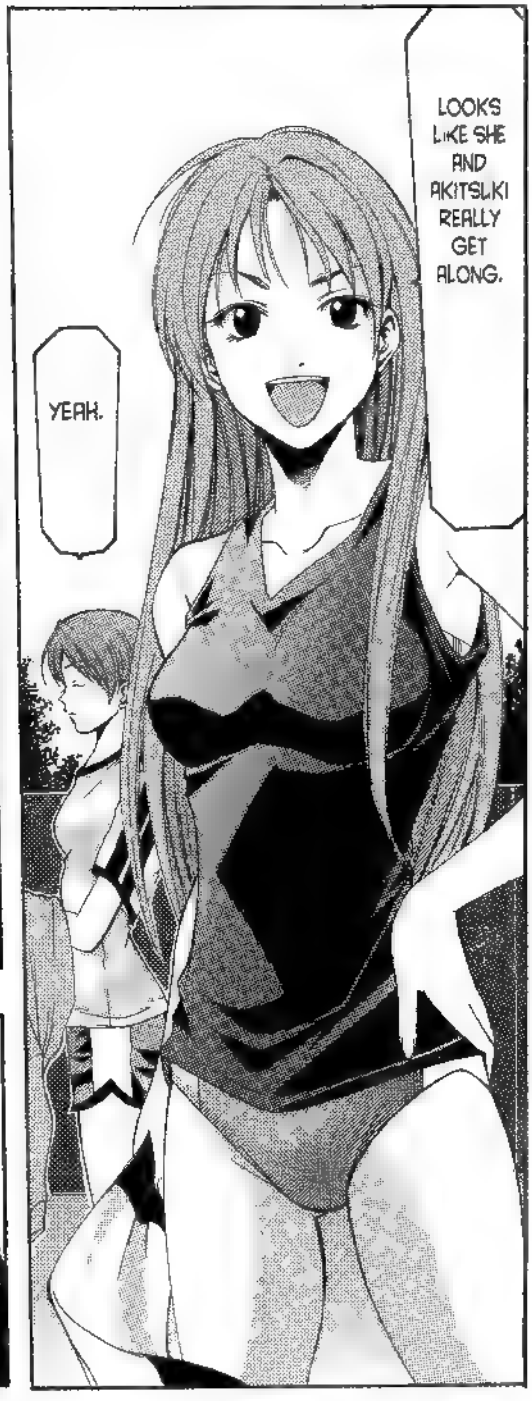
I'M SAKURAI HONOKA. STARTING TODAY, I'LL BE THE NEW TEAM MANAGER.
もじ JITTER
もじ JITTER
IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU ALL.
WHOA, WHAT A CUTIE!
WAH
AWESOME! WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR A MANAGER.
WELL, I WAS THINKING... I'M REALLY NOT MUCH OF AN ATHLETE, BUT...
I THINK I'D MAKE A GOOD MANAGER.
AH, AKITSUKI-KUN.
I DIDN'T REALIZE YOU WERE GONNA JOIN THE TEAM AS A MANAGER, HONOKA-CHAN.
REALLY?
BUT BEING A MANAGER IS HARD WORK, TOO, YOU KNOW!

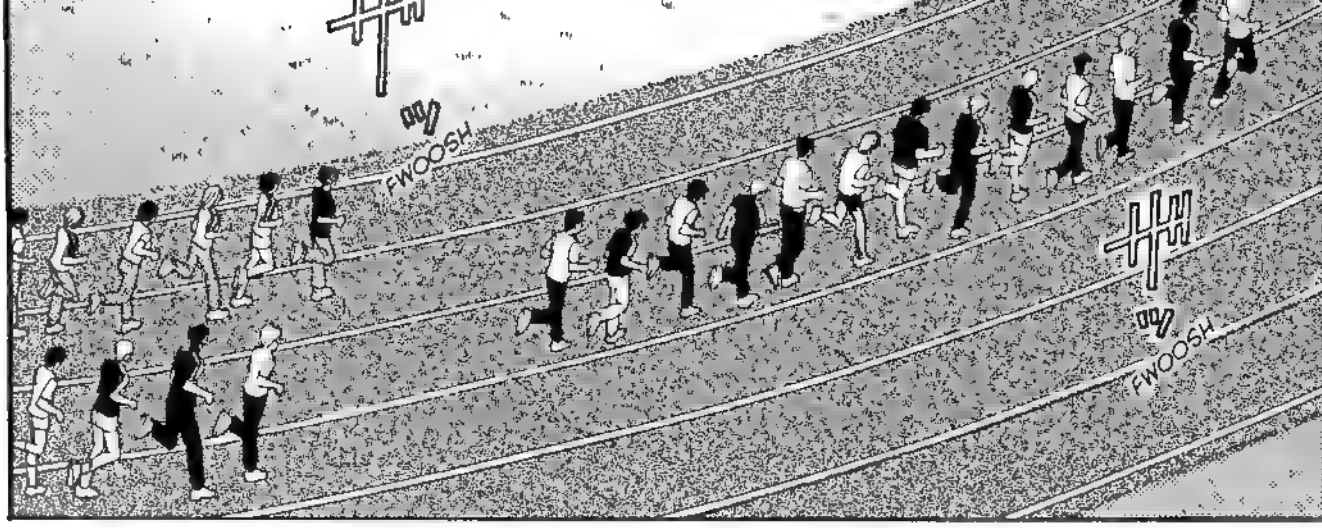
I'LL DO MY BEST!
DON'T WORRY!

...BOYFRIEND AND GIRLFRIEND OR SOMETHING?
ARE THEY...


WHY DON'T YOU QUIT BABBLING, AND...


AH!
WAIT UP, ASAHINA!
...START RUNNING, MIKI.


LOOKS LIKE SHE AND AKITSUKI REALLY GET ALONG.
YEAH.


FWOOSH
FWOOSH

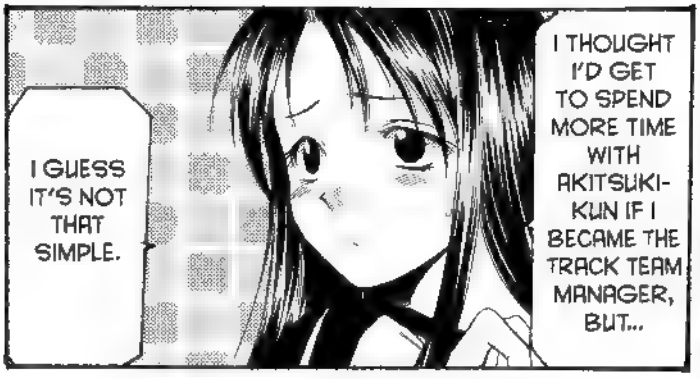
ONE MORE LAP, AKITSUKI! HANG IN THERE.
HA-HA

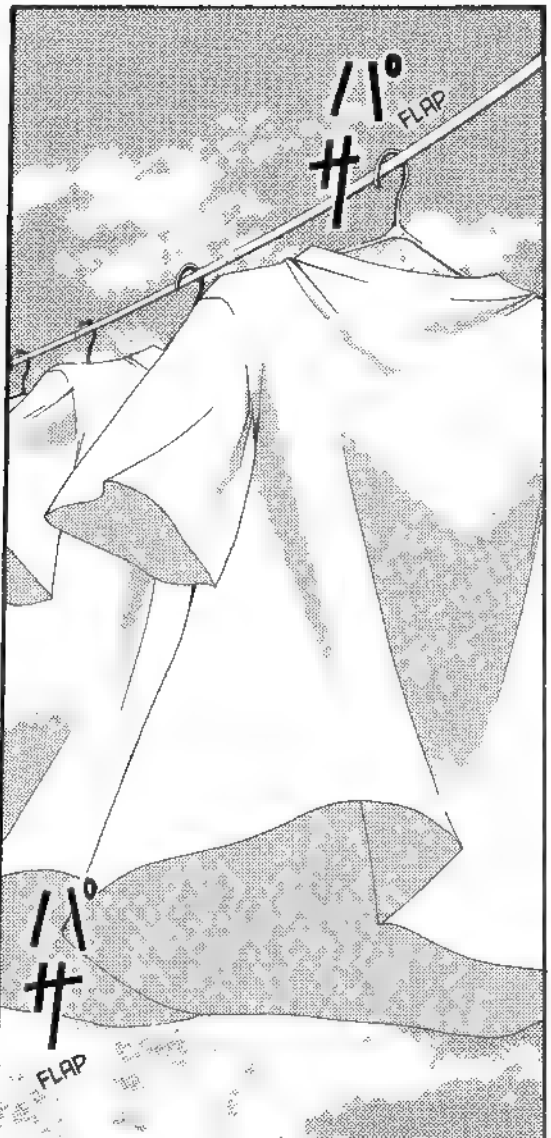
FWOOSH

OKAY!
WHOOSH

IT NEVER ENDS.
THERE'S SO MUCH LAUNDRY.
ゴシゴシ SCRUB
ゴシゴシ SCRUB

EEW! THIS STINKS!
ピーん BLEAH


I GUESS IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE.
I THOUGHT I'D GET TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH AKITSUKI-KUN IF I BECAME THE TRACK TEAM MANAGER, BUT...

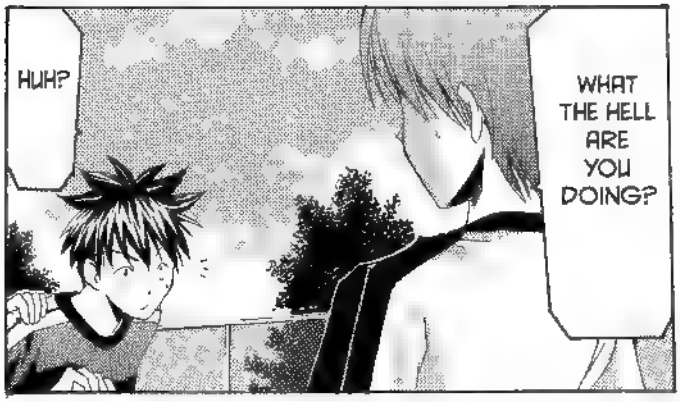

パタ FLAP
パタ FLAP

OKAY, THAT'S IT, GUYS!
PAT
ポンッ
GOOD WORK, AKITSUKI!
YOU MANAGED TO KEEP UP THIS TIME.
DAMN! I KEEP HOPING IT'LL GET EASIER.
WHAT? HEY, I DIDN'T HIT YOU THAT HARD, DID I?
STOP PICKING ON AKITSUKI.
YOU'RE SO MEAN, HASHIBA.
SHIVER
SHIVER
OUCH.
...ARE YOU OKAY?
...I'M SORRY.

OUCH!
I'LL GIVE YOU A MASSAGE.
EVERYBODY SAYS I'M THE BEST.
もぎゅ!!
SQUEEZE

YEAH... I'M JUST REALLY SORE.
OH, RIGHT. IT'S ONLY BEEN A WEEK, SO YOUR BODY'S NOT USED TO IT YET.

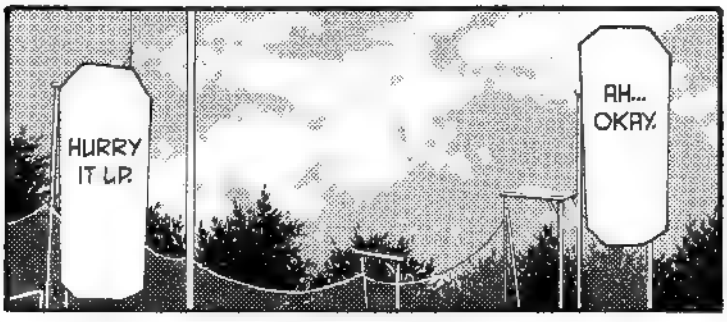
.....


HUH?
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?

HEY, STOP SQUIRMING.
THAT'S ENOUGH. JUST LEAVE ME ALONE.

WOULD YOU TWO PLEASE JUST STOP SCREWING AROUND?

WHAT-EVER.
プイッ
HMMPH
WHAT?
I'M NOT SCREWING AROUND.

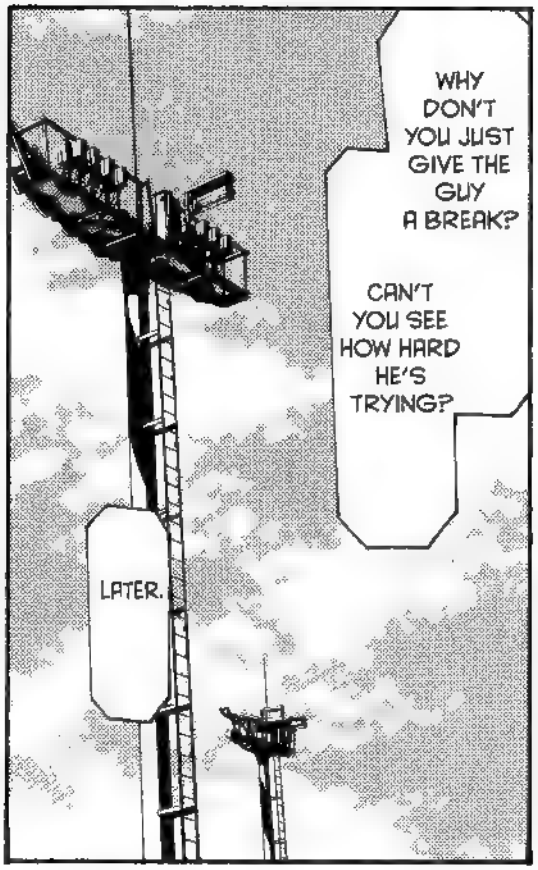

HURRY IT UP.
AH... OKAY.

HEY, HASHIBA/ AKITSUKI/ LET'S START THE 200-METER INTERVALS.
GIVE ME A BREAK. I'M DOING THE BEST I CAN...

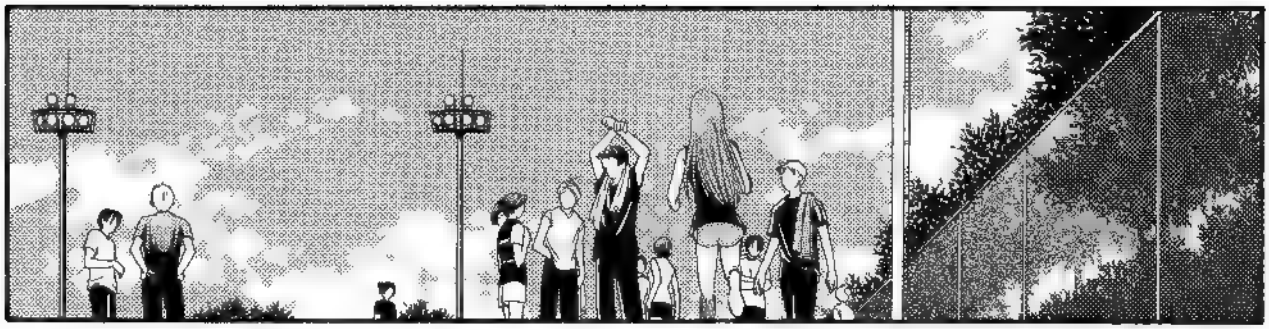
SHIT/ THE LAST THING I WANNA DO IS GET IN A FIGHT WITH ASAHINA...
CLOPPA
CLOPPA
I MEAN, IF ALL WE'RE GONNA DO IS FIGHT, WHY'D I EVEN BOTHER JOINING?

YOU'RE PATHETIC, MIKI.
.....
WHY ARE YOU BEING SO MEAN TO HIM, SUZUKA?
HE'S REALLY TRYING HARD.
STOP SCREWING AROUND.
YOU'RE LETTING YAMATO-KUN SLOW YOU DOWN.
YOU'VE BEEN ACTING REALLY WEIRD LATELY.
I-I DON'T HAVE A PROBLEM.
ARE YOU SURE?
.....
...WHAT IS YOUR PROBLEM?

.....

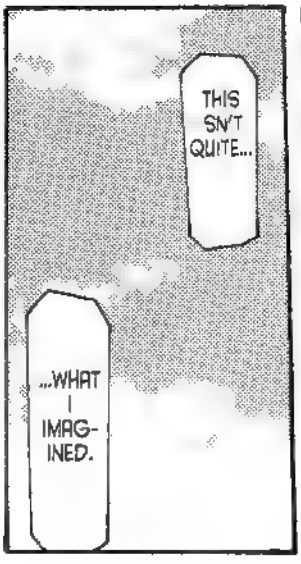

WHY DON'T YOU JUST GIVE THE GUY A BREAK?
CAN'T YOU SEE HOW HARD HE'S TRYING?
LATER.

EVER SINCE AKITSUKI JOINED THE TEAM, YOU'VE BEEN ACTING LIKE A REAL BITCH...
YOU'RE LIKE A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSON.



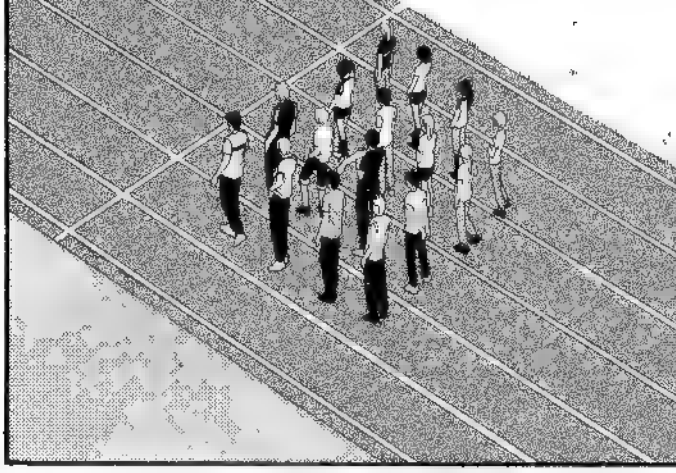
YEAH, THEN COME BACK OVER HERE AND TIME US.
HUH?
HEY, SAKURAI! WILL YOU REFILL THE POKARI TANK?

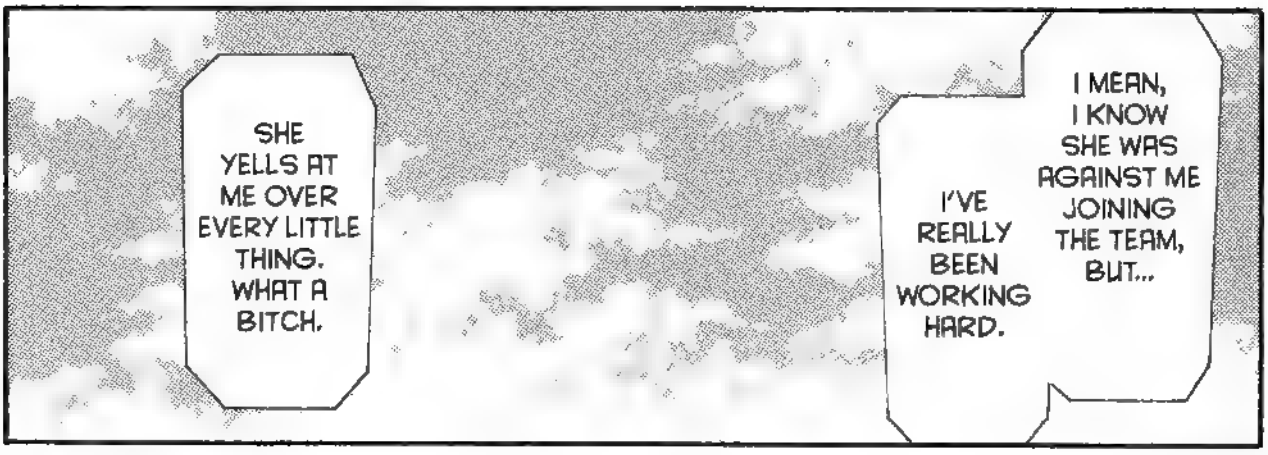
TAPPA
THEY FINALLY FINISHED!
TAPPA
I'LL GO GIVE AKITSUKI-KUN A TOWEL!

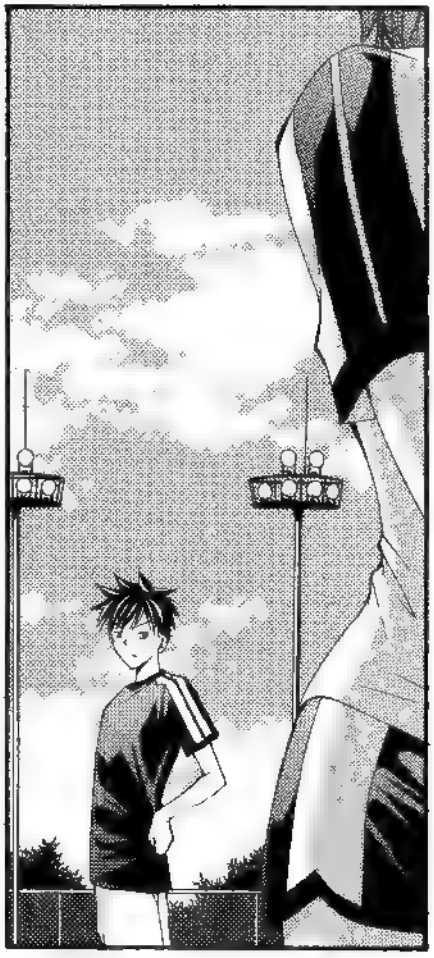

THIS SN'T QUITE...
...WHAT I IMAG-INED.

.....
OKAY.

WHAT THE HELL IS HER PROBLEM?




I MEAN, I KNOW SHE WAS AGAINST ME JOINING THE TEAM, BUT...
I'VE REALLY BEEN WORKING HARD.
SHE YELLS AT ME OVER EVERY LITTLE THING. WHAT A BITCH.



WHY DOES SHE HAVE TO BE SO CUTE?
SHIT...

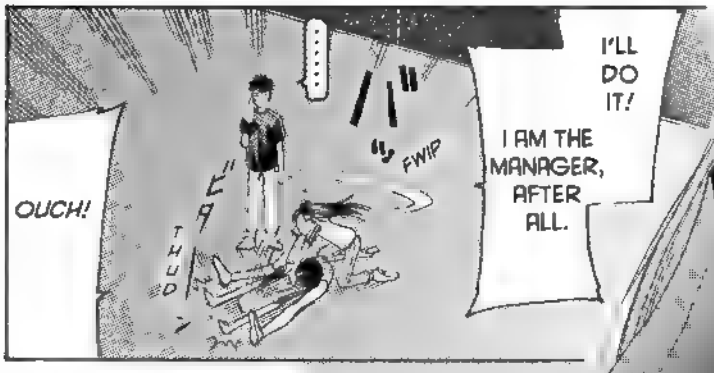
I'M GONNA WORK SO HARD, SHE WON'T BE ABLE TO TALK SHIT TO ME ANYMORE!
WHOOSH
TO HELL WITH THIS! I'M JUST GONNA TRY EVEN HARDER!
AH...I'M READY!
QUIT SPACING OUT, AKITSUKI!
YOU'RE NEXT!
WHY'S HE PISSED AT ME?
WHAT'S HIS PROB-LEM?

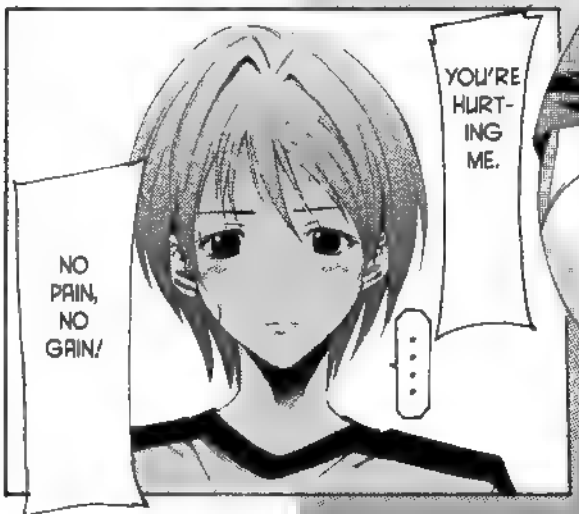
WHY DON'T YOU JUST GIVE THE GUY A BREAK?
CAN'T YOU SEE HOW HARD HE'S TRYING?
WHY ARE YOU BEING SO MEAN TO HIM, SUZUKA?
.....
SHOCK
IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE HE STARTS SLOWING THE WHOLE TEAM DOWN.
S-SURE, HE MIGHT BE TRYING HARD NOW, BUT...
WANNA GET SOME GRUB?
PHEW... WHAT A WORK-OUT!
OKAY, THAT'S IT FOR TODAY! LET'S DO OUR COOL-DOWN, AND THEN HIT THE SHOWERS!
JUST WATCH!

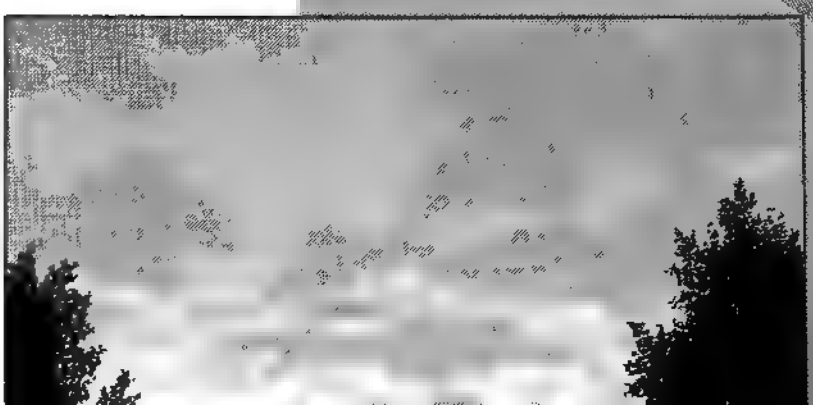
OUCH!
AKITSUKI-KUN!
WHOOSH
HUH?
SHUT UP! I DIDN'T EVEN WANNA DO THIS IN THE FIRST PLACE!
THAT HURTS! DON'T DO IT SO FAST!
HERE'S YOUR TOWEL!

Y-YOU'RE WELCOME.
AH! THANKS, SAKURAI!

COMING!
GRR


OUCH!
THUD
FWIP
I'LL DO IT!
I AM THE MANAGER, AFTER ALL.

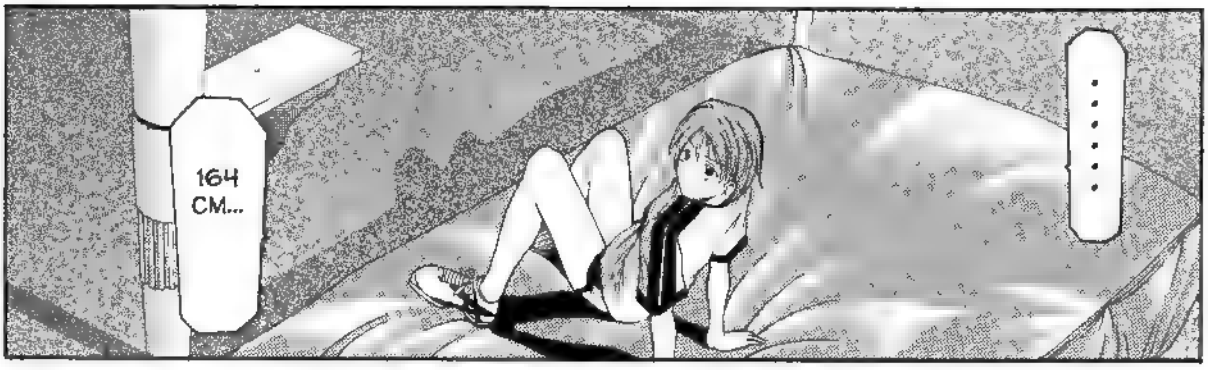

NO PAIN, NO GAIN!
YOU'RE HURT-ING ME.

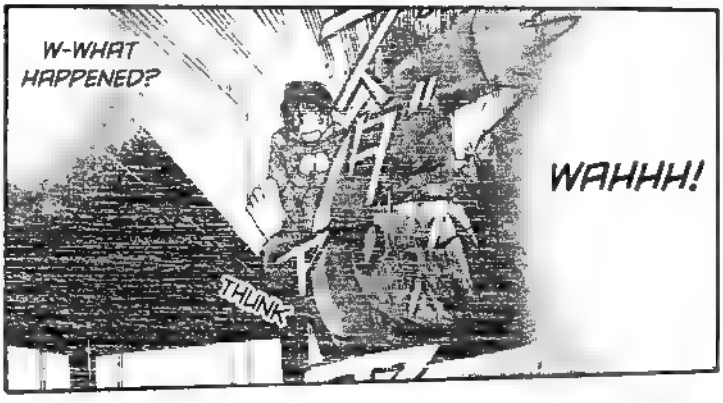


GET OVER HERE, AND PUSH ON MY BACK, AKITSUKI!

DAMN IT!

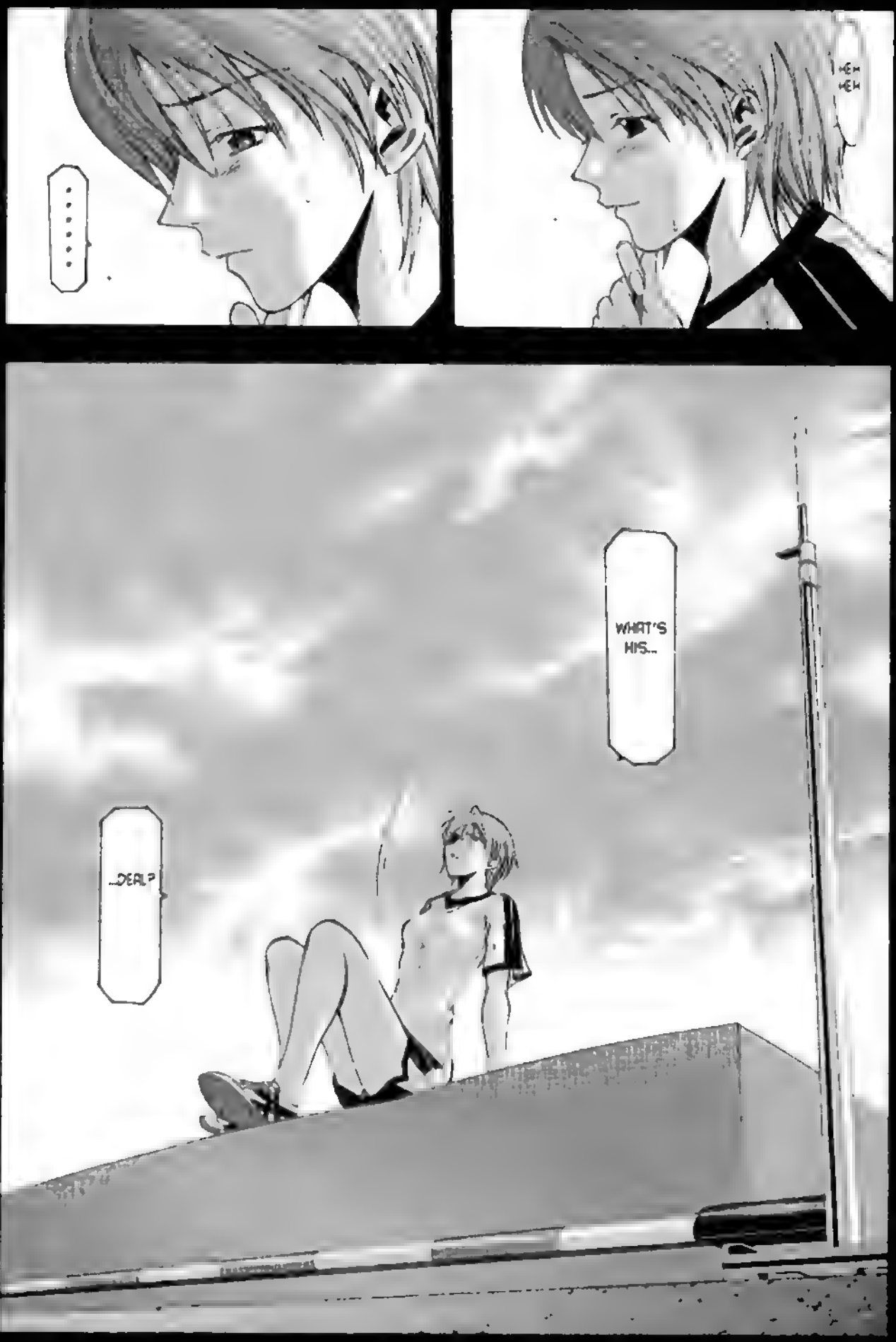
DO THEY HAVE TO FLIRT IN FRONT OF EVERYBODY LIKE THAT?
WHAT IS WRONG WITH THEM?


164 CM...
.....

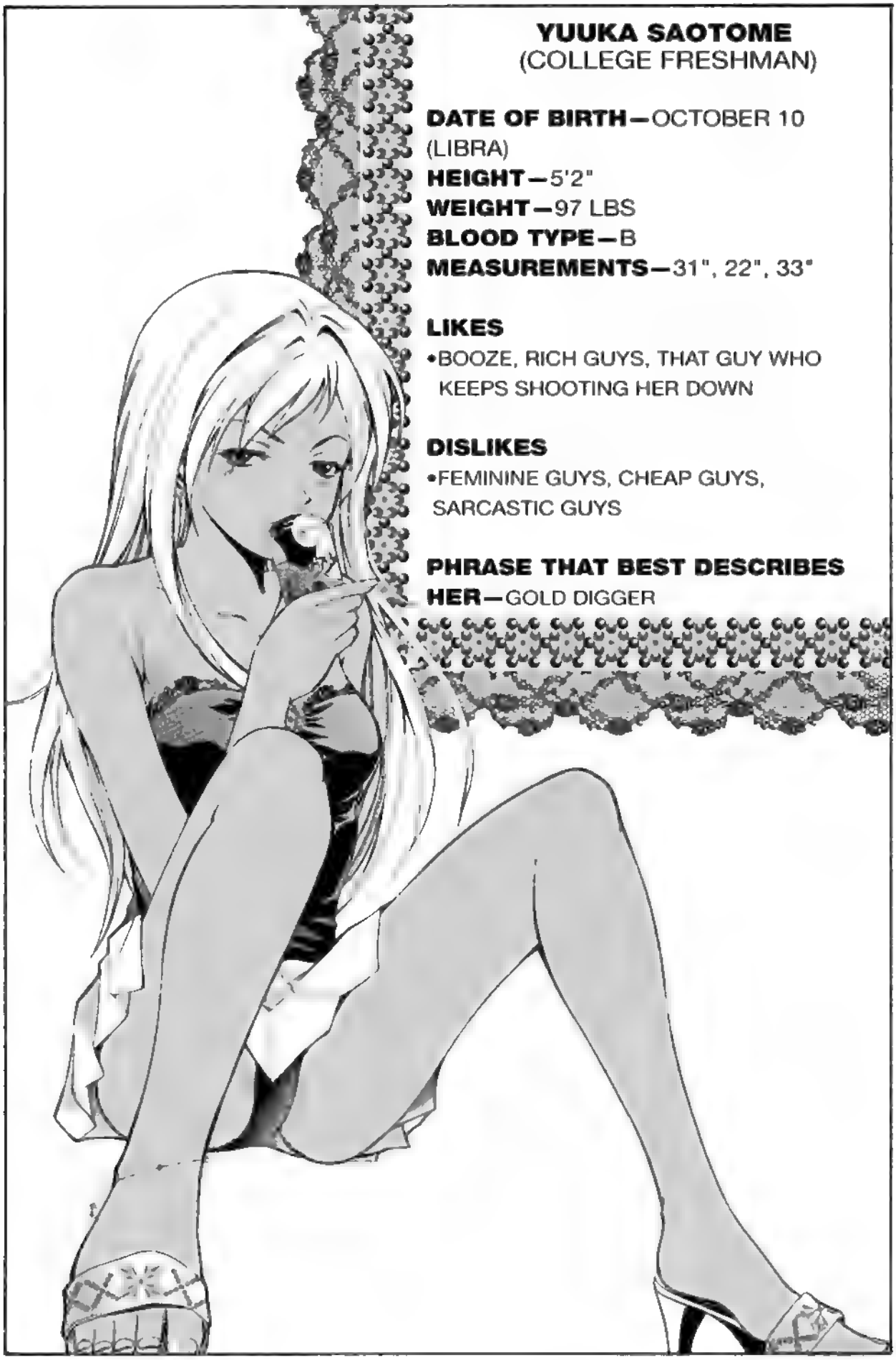

W-WHAT HAPPENED?
WAHHH!
THUNK

NO! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO LINE THE TOP OF THE BAR UP AT 164 CENTIMETERS, YOU IDIOT!
WHAT? WELL, HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO KNOW?

HUH?
W-WOW! LOOK, YOU CAN SEE THE CITY DOWN BELOW.


.....
HEH HEH
WHAT'S HIS...
...DEAL?

CHARACTER PROFILE NO. 5



YUUKA SAOTOME
(COLLEGE FRESHMAN)

DATE OF BIRTH—OCTOBER 10 (LIBRA)
HEIGHT—5'2"
WEIGHT—97 LBS
BLOOD TYPE—B
MEASUREMENTS—31", 22", 33"

LIKES

- BOOZE, RICH GUYS, THAT GUY WHO KEEPS SHOOTING HER DOWN

DISLIKES

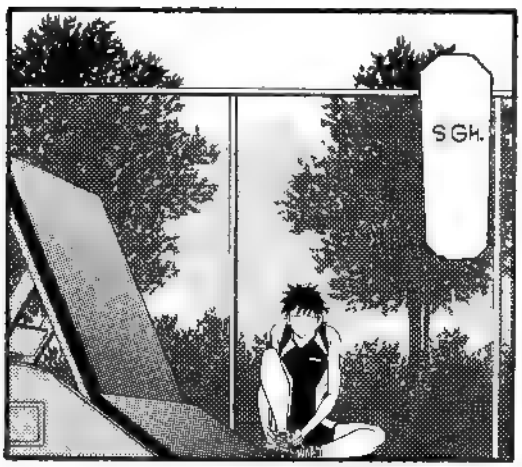
- FEMININE GUYS, CHEAP GUYS, SARCASTIC GUYS

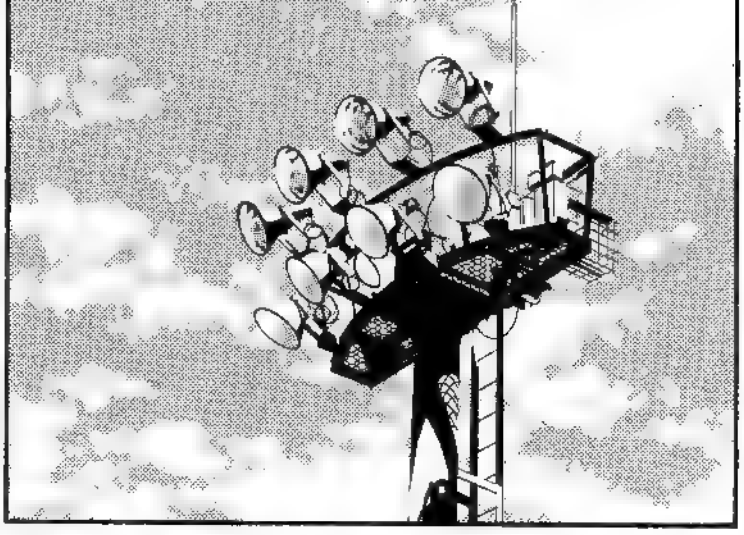
PHRASE THAT BEST DESCRIBES HER—GOLD DIGGER

HERE SHE COMES!
コツ
STEP
コツ
STEP
YEAH.
コツ
STEP
コツ
STEP
GOOD MORNING. YOU ON YOUR WAY TO SCHOOL?
AH.
ガチ
CLICK
O-OH. WELL...
WE COULD WALK TOGETHER?

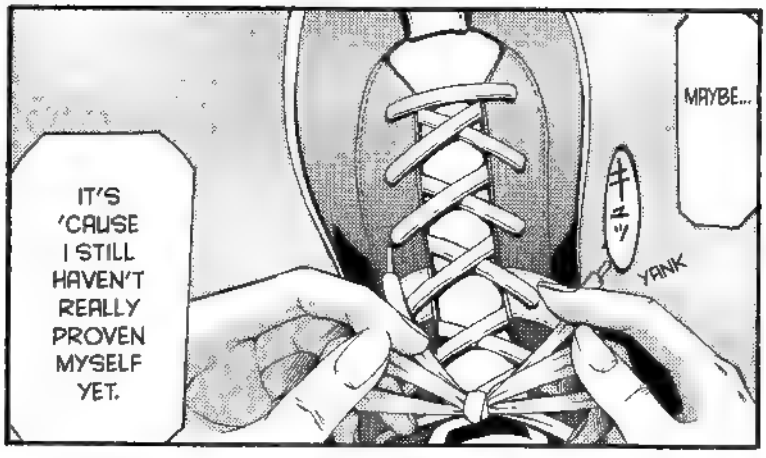
SUZUKA

#19 Rejection


SIGH.



I'M DOING THE BEST I CAN.
WHY DOES SHE HATE ME SO MUCH?


IT'S 'CAUSE I STILL HAVEN'T REALLY PROVEN MYSELF YET.
MAYBE...
ﾆｯ
YANK

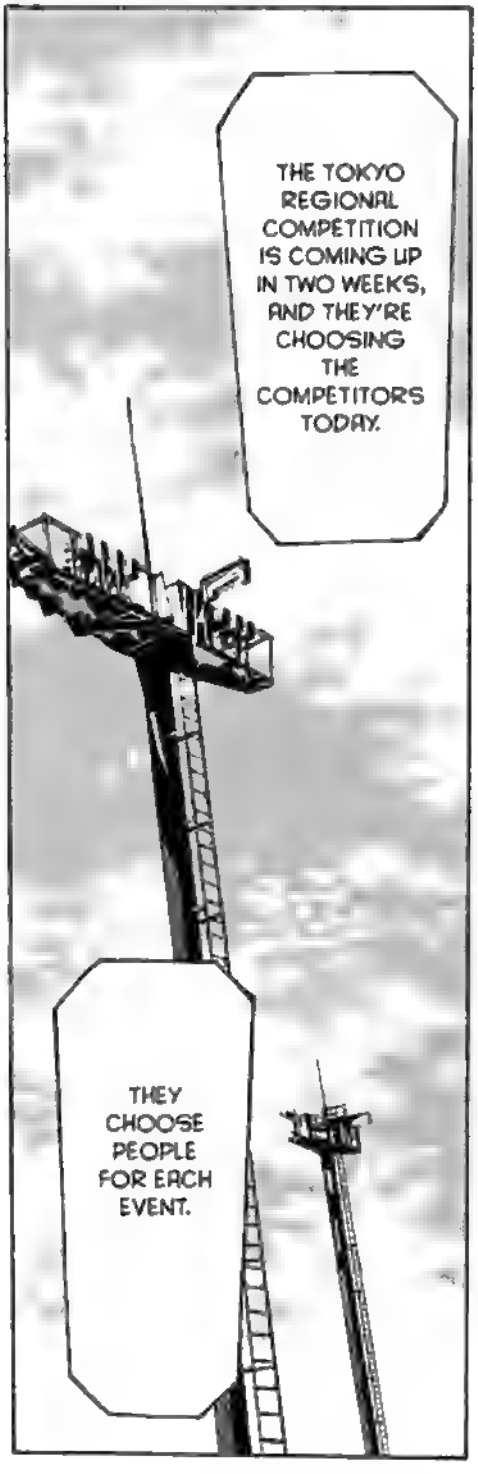
THE WHOLE TEAM SPENDS DAY AFTER DAY AT PRACTICE...
...TRYING TO BEAT THEIR RECORD BY AN EXTRA SECOND...OR AN EXTRA CENTIMETER.

HUH?
WOW. YOU'VE ACTUALLY GOT A PRETTY NICE BODY, AKITSUKI.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING WALKING AROUND LIKE THAT? YOU'RE PRACTICALLY NAKED.
H-HASHIBA!
YOU'RE FULL OF SURPRISES.
WHAT? THIS IS MY RUNNING OUTFIT.
I-IT IS?
WHY DO YOU HAVE TO SAY STUFF LIKE THAT?
QUIT TRYING TO EMBARASS ME.

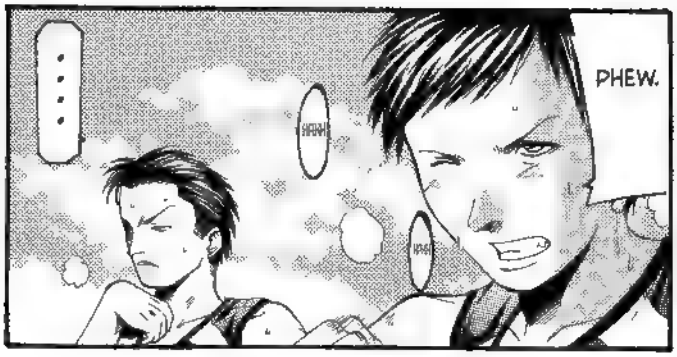
OH, YEAH. I GUESS YOU JOINED RIGHT AFTER THE MEETING.
WHAT'RE YOU...
...SO HAPPY ABOUT ANYWAY?

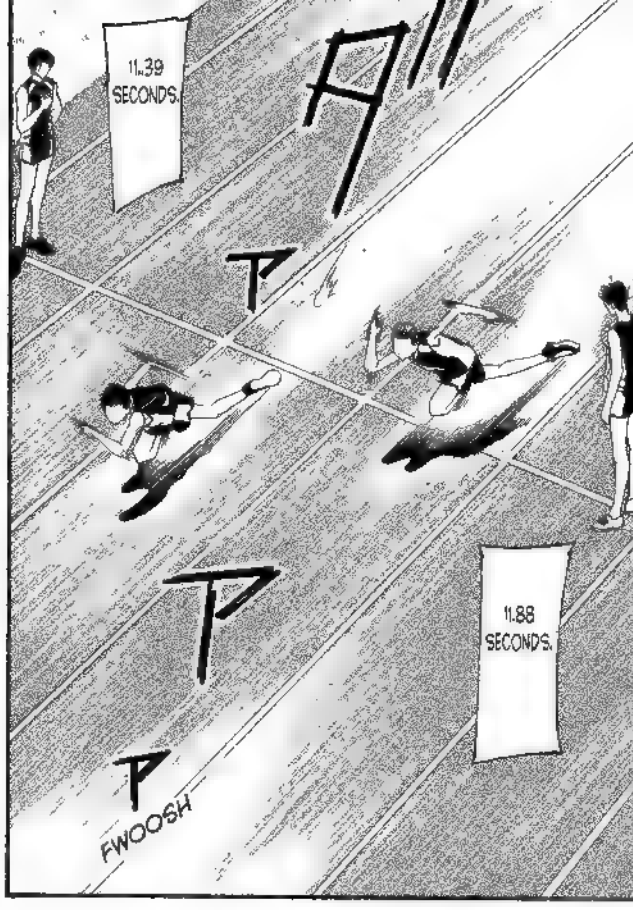
THAT'S RIGHT!
OH, SO THAT'S WHY THEY TOLD ME TO WEAR MY RUNNING GEAR AND BRING MY SPIKES.


THE TOKYO REGIONAL COMPETITION IS COMING UP IN TWO WEEKS, AND THEY'RE CHOOSING THE COMPETITORS TODAY.
THEY CHOOSE PEOPLE FOR EACH EVENT.

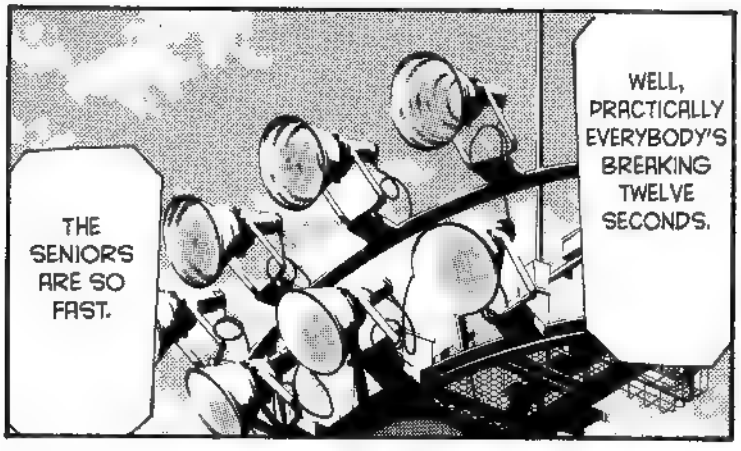
...BUT THE MEN'S SHORT DISTANCE SPRINT IS ABOUT AS COMPETITIVE AS IT GETS.
WHO KNOWS? YOU MIGHT EVEN QUALIFY IF YOUR TIME IS GOOD ENOUGH.

IF MY TIME IS GOOD ENOUGH...
OH...

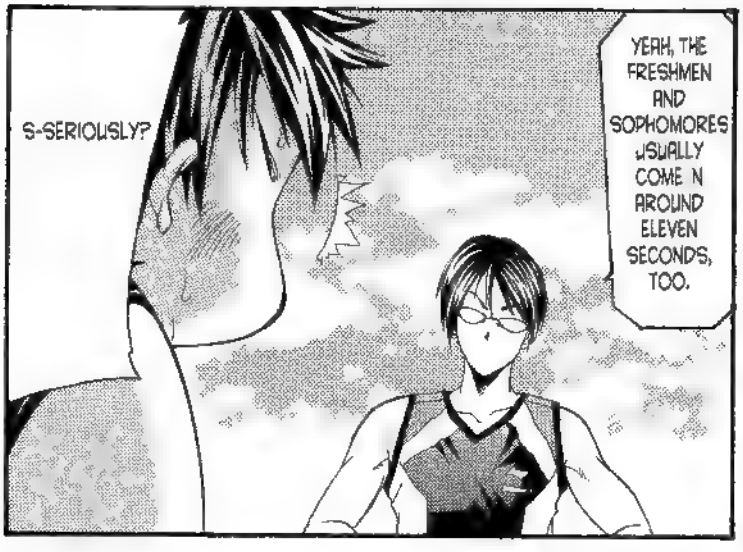

PHEW.
HAH
HAH


11.39 SECONDS.
11.88 SECONDS.
FWOOSH

EVERYONE LOOKS SO SERIOUS.
WHOA! I CAN ALMOST FEEL THE TENSION IN THE AIR.


THE SENIORS ARE SO FAST.
WELL, PRACTICALLY EVERYBODY'S BREAKING TWELVE SECONDS.

WHAT'S WRONG, AK TSUKI? YOU DON'T LOOK SO GOOD.
MIYAMOTO-SEMPAI...


S-SERIOUSLY?
YEAH, THE FRESHMEN AND SOPHOMORES USUALLY COME IN AROUND ELEVEN SECONDS, TOO.

NEXT UP, AKITSUKI AND KOBAYA-KAWA!
GOOD LUCK!
PAT
DON'T WORRY. YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO BEAT 'EM.
ESPECIALLY AFTER THE TWO WEEKS YOU JUST SPENT TRAINING.
UH...
I'VE JUST GOTTA GET THROUGH THIS WITHOUT PISSING ASAHINA OFF.
FORGET ABOUT MY TIME...
カチャ
CLINK
カチャ
CLINK
HANG IN THERE, AKITSUKI-KUN!
TH-THANKS.
WHAT?
HUH? AKITSUKI'S GOING FOR A TWO-FOOTED LAUNCH?

OH YEAH.
HE DID THAT LAST TIME, TOO, AND HE SET A RECORD!
.....
HMM...
ON YOUR MARKS...
OKAY!
FINALLY, A CHANCE FOR REVENGE!
TRACK SCHOLARSHIP STUDENT KENJI KOBAYAKAWA-KUN
THIS SUCKS.
ASAHINA'S WATCHING.
GET SET!

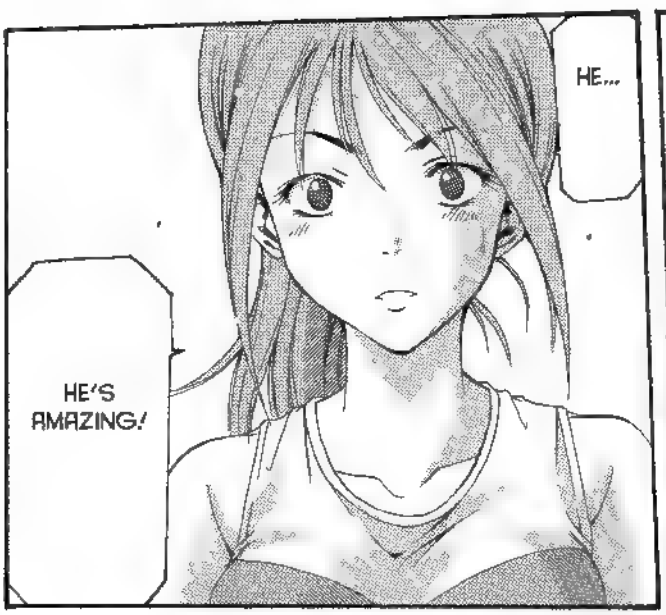
THEY'RE ALL JUST TALKING OUT THEIR ASSES!
BANG
WELL, ANYWAY...
YOU'RE FAST, DUDE.
DON'T WORRY.
YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO BEAT 'EM.
THEY THINK...
THEY KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT ME!

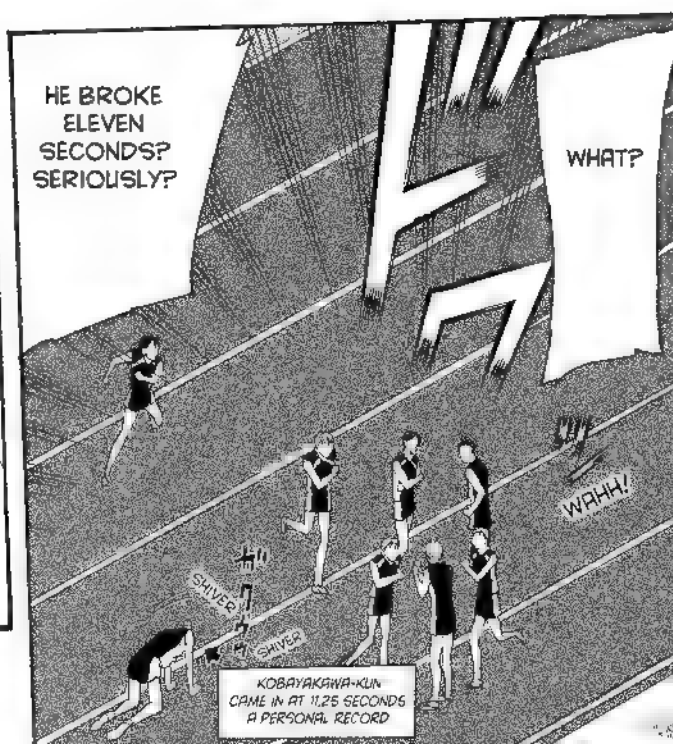
WHOA! AKITSUKI IS FAST!
HOLY SHIT! WHERE'D THEY FIND THAT GUY?
...
HE STILL HASN'T PASSED ME
FWOOSH

SHIT! I'M GETTING TIRED.
100 METERS NEVER FELT SO FAR!
.....!
TAPPA
TAPPA
TAPPA
CAN'T FUCK THIS UP!
ALMOST THERE!

FWOOMP
BEEP

10.98 SECONDS?
0:00.10 98
T-

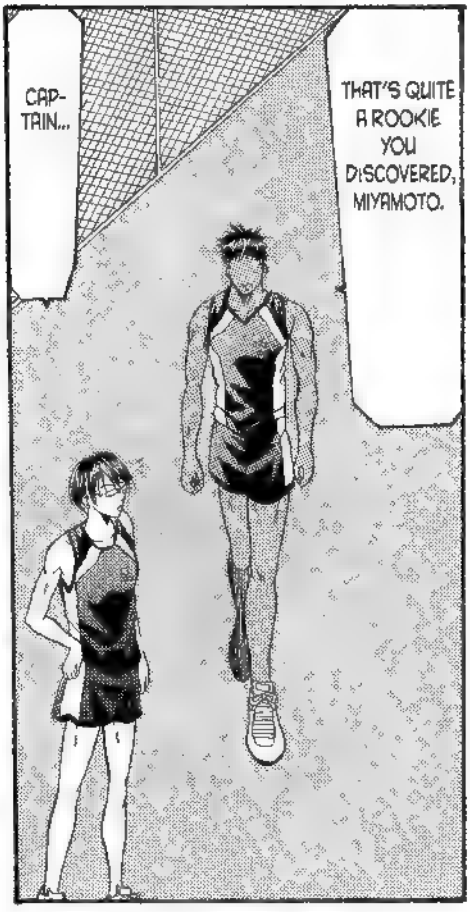

HE...
HE'S AMAZING!


HE BROKE ELEVEN SECONDS? SERIOUSLY?
WHAT?
WAHH!
SHIVER
SHIVER
KOBAYAKAWA-KUN CAME IN AT 11.25 SECONDS A PERSONAL RECORD

REALLY?
HUH? DID I WIN?

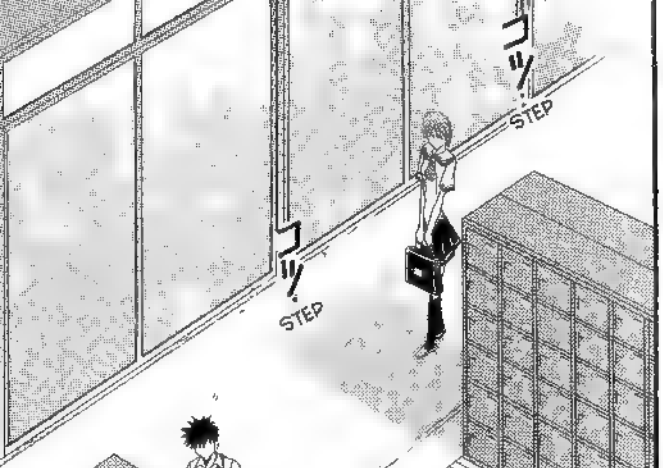
?
ガシャーン
CRASH
YOU CAN STOP RUNNING NOW, AKITSUKI.

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT HE'D BREAK ELEVEN SECONDS IN HIS FIRST 100-METER DASH?
I HAD NO IDEA HE'D BE THIS GOOD.


CAP-TAIN...
THAT'S QUITE A ROOKIE YOU DISCOVERED, MIYAMOTO.

YEAH...
HE SURE DOES.
DOESN'T AKITSUKI REMIND YOU OF SOMEONE?

THE MORE I WATCH HIM...
THE MORE HE REMINDS ME OF...
COME ON, GET UP!
HELP ME!
WHAT A KLUTZ!
.....
HEH, HEH.
ホクホク
GRIN
パーン
SLAM
WOW, AKITSUKI!
YOU DEFINITELY MADE THE CUT.

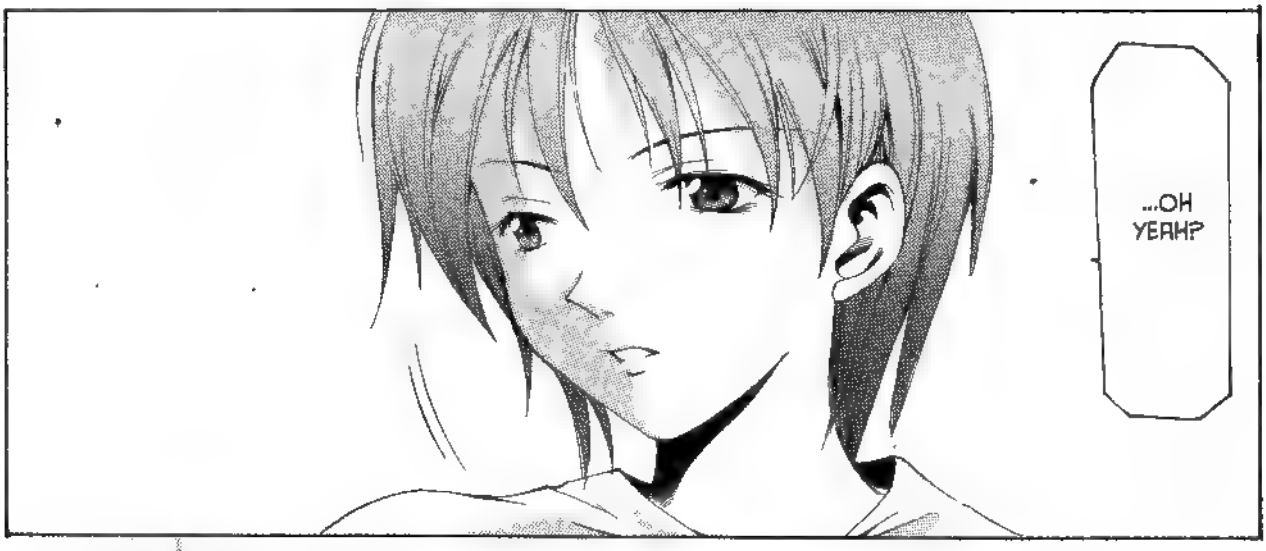

STEP
STEP

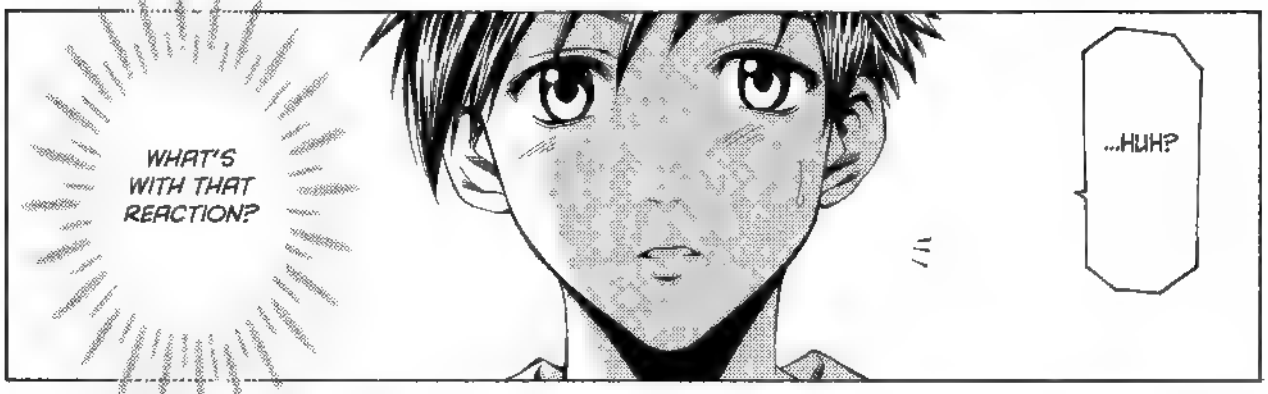
NOW THAT I'VE PROVEN MYSELF...
...MAYBE ASAHINA WILL FINALLY...

ASAHINA.
.....!

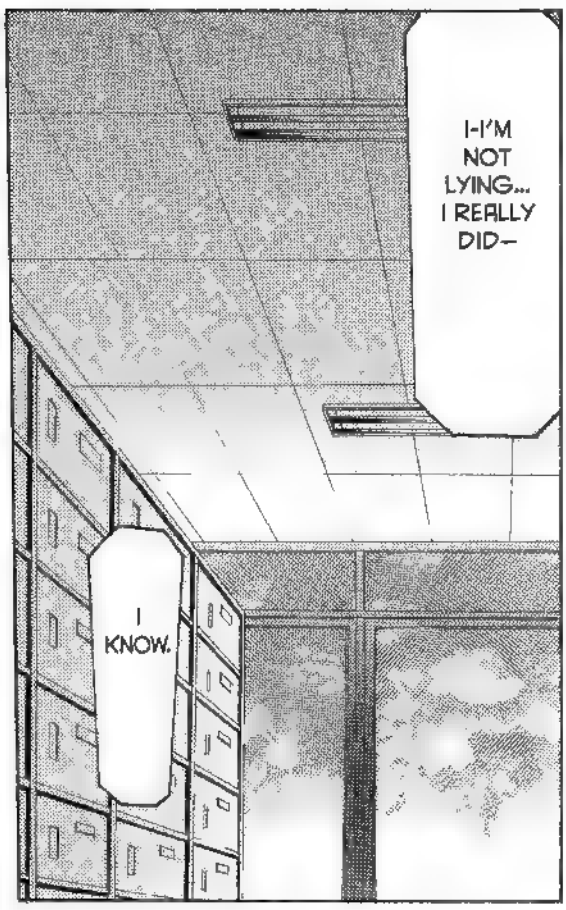
I REALLY GAVE IT MY ALL!
H-HEY... TODAY I RAN THE 100-METER DASH IN 10.98 SECONDS.
.....

AH...


...OH YEAH?


WHAT'S WITH THAT REACTION?
...HUH?

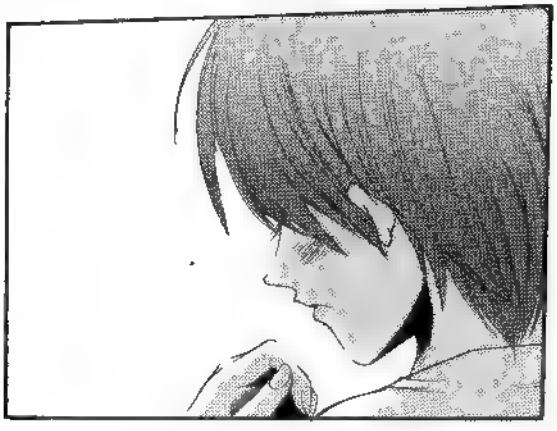
I SAW YOU.


I-I'M NOT LYING... I REALLY DID–
I KNOW.

O-OH...
SO, THEN WHY...

OH! AND I MADE IT INTO THE TOKYO REGIONALS.
I PROVED MYSELF!
...WELL, GOOD FOR YOU.
.....
WH-WHAT'S UP WITH HER?
.....
WA—
FLICK
I'M GOING HOME. BYE.
AH!
STEP
WAIT!
.....!

WHY DON'T YOU LIKE ME?
I DON'T GET YOU AT ALL!



THAT HURTS! LET GO OF ME!
SWIP
AH!

THE VERY SIGHT OF YOU JUST PISSES ME OFF!
WHAT I'M SAYING IS SAY IT...
I HATE YOU, TAMPTO KUN!
...!!

CHARACTER PROFILE NO. 6

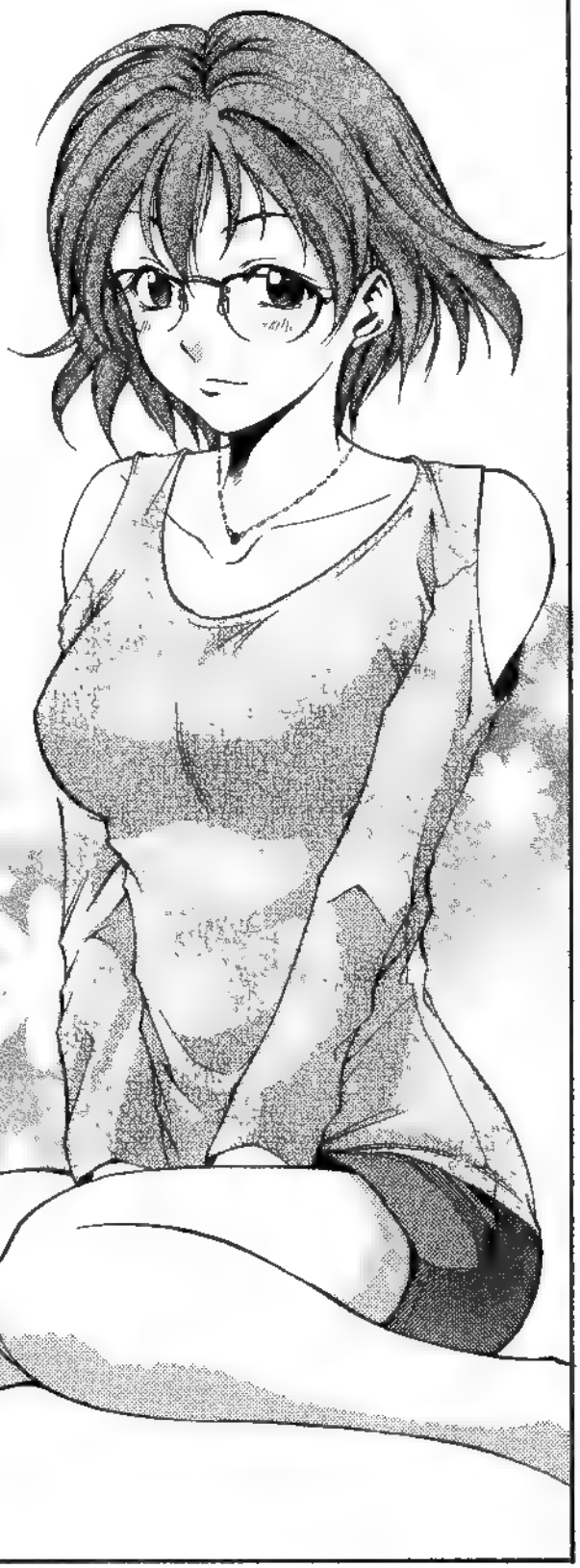
MEGUMI MATSUMOTO
(COLLEGE FRESHMAN)

DATE OF BIRTH—MAY 14 (TAURUS)
HEIGHT—5'2"
WEIGHT—103 LBS
BLOOD TYPE—AB
MEASUREMENTS—36", 23", 34"

LIKES
- BOOZE
- QUIET PLACES
- GUYS WHO CARE ABOUT MORE THAN JUST BOOBS

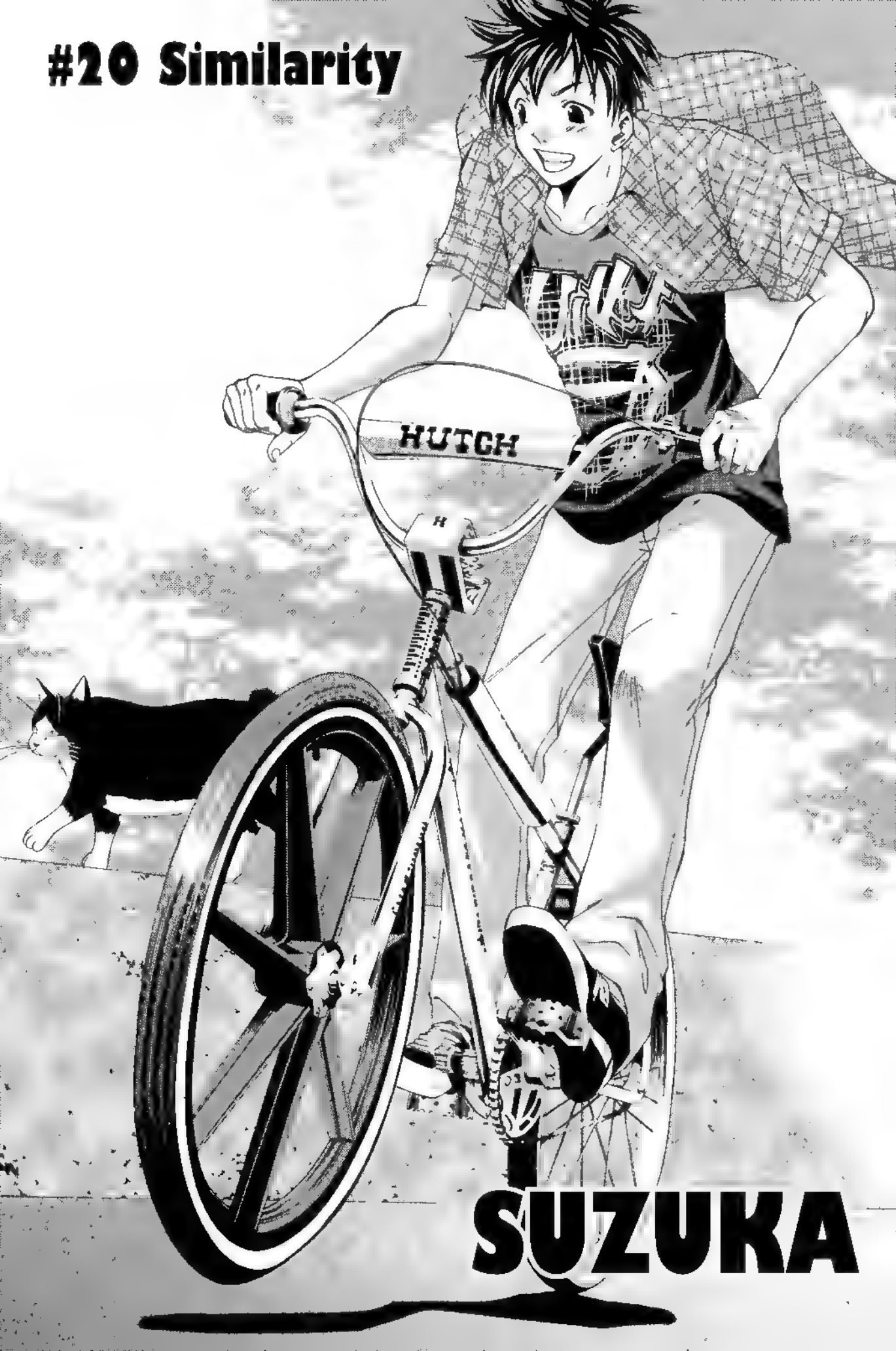
DISLIKES
- JUMPING AROUND
- NOISY PLACES
- GUYS WHO ONLY CARE ABOUT BOOBS

DREAM—TO HAVE SMALLER BOOBS



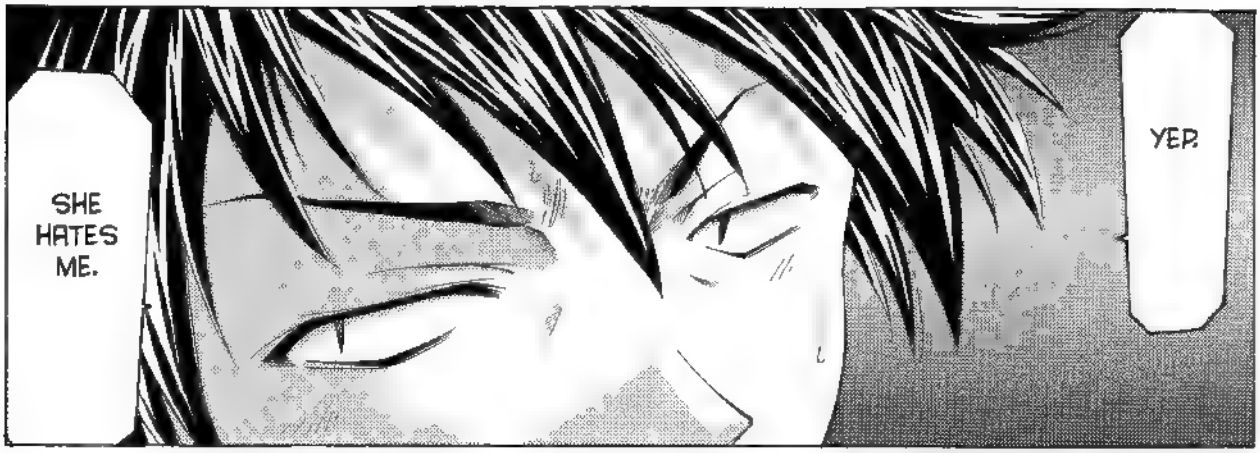
WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS...
I HATE YOU, YAMATO-KUN!
.....

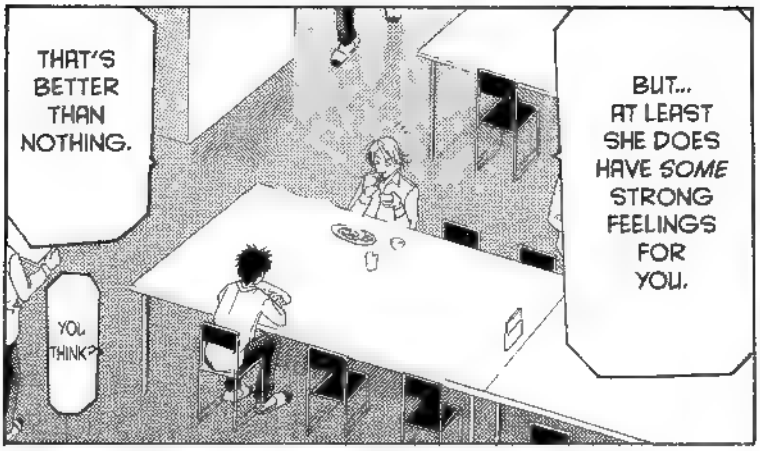
#20 Similarity

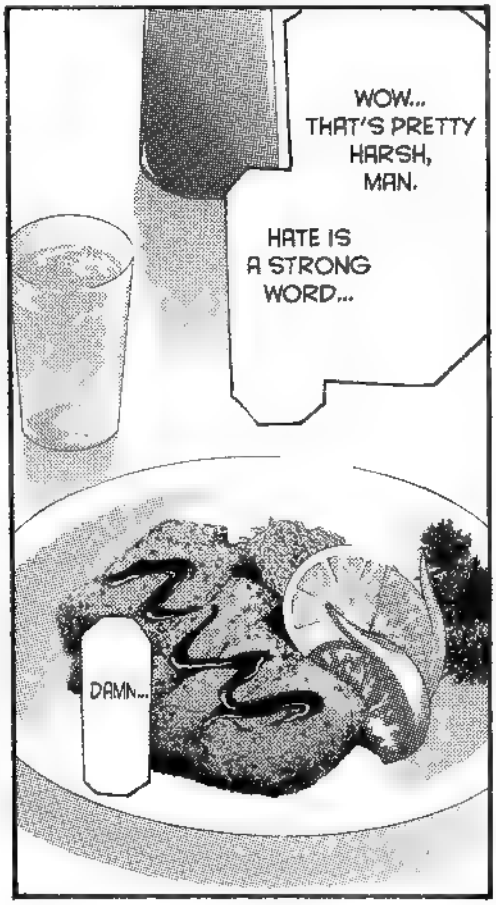


SUZUKA

...HATES YOU?
SHE...

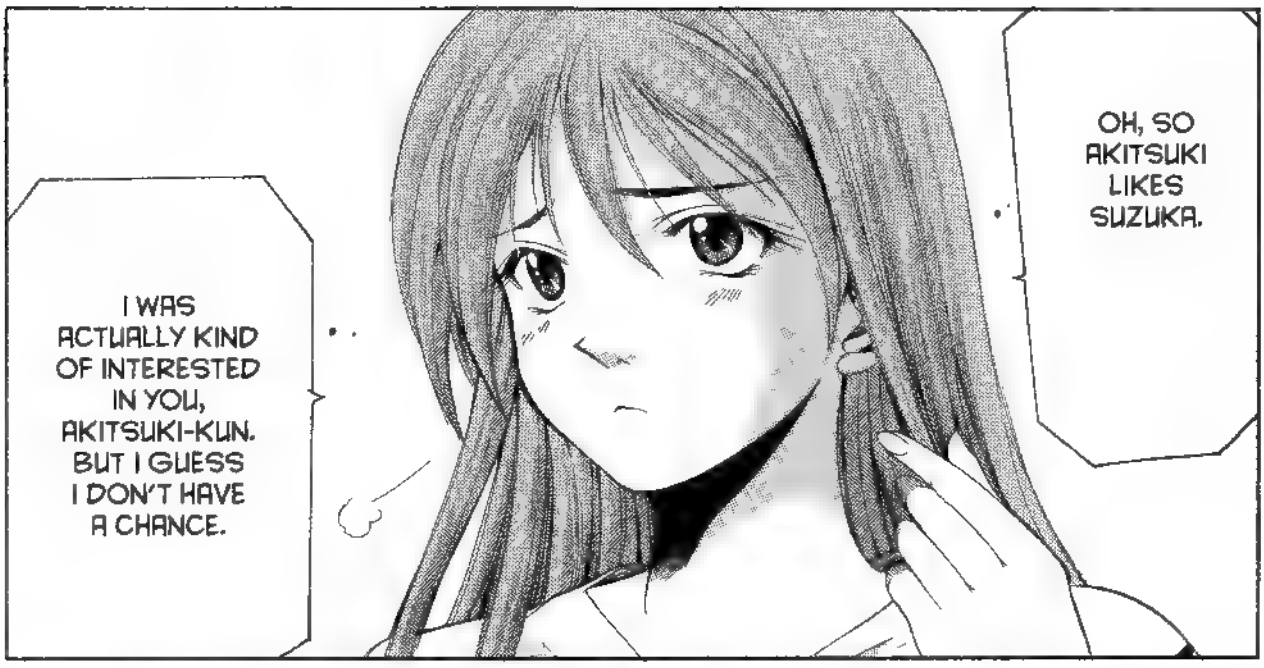

SHE HATES ME.
YEP.


THAT'S BETTER THAN NOTHING.
YOU THINK?
BUT... AT LEAST SHE DOES HAVE *SOME* STRONG FEELINGS FOR YOU.

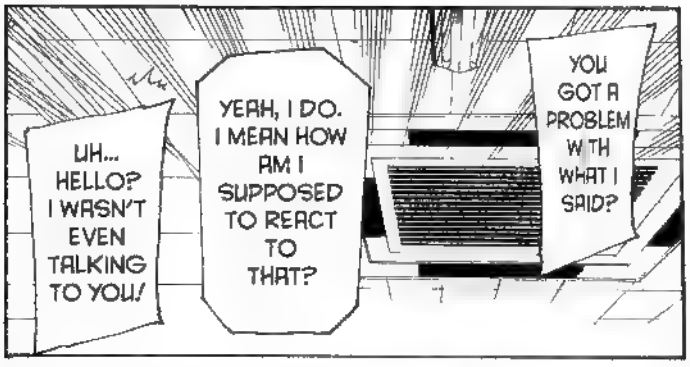

WOW... THAT'S PRETTY HARSH, MAN.
HATE IS A STRONG WORD...
DAMN...

IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER?
SURE. I MEAN I'VE HEARD OF GUYS WHO START OUT STALKING CHICKS AND END UP MARRYING THEM.

HEY, AKITSUKI. YOU'RE HAVING LUNCH, TOO?
UH.... NOTHING.
HASHIBA...
WHY THE LONG FACE? WHAT'S WRONG?
HEY, SHUT UP!
WHAT?
ACTUALLY, HE'S IN LOVE WITH SUZUKA-CHAN, AND SHE JUST TOLD HIM THAT SHE HATES HIS GUTS.
WHAT'VE YOU GOT TO LOSE NOW?
YOU MIGHT AS WELL PUT ALL YOUR CARDS ON THE TABLE.


OH, SO AKITSUKI LIKES SUZUKA.
I WAS ACTUALLY KIND OF INTERESTED IN YOU, AKITSUKI-KUN. BUT I GUESS I DON'T HAVE A CHANCE.

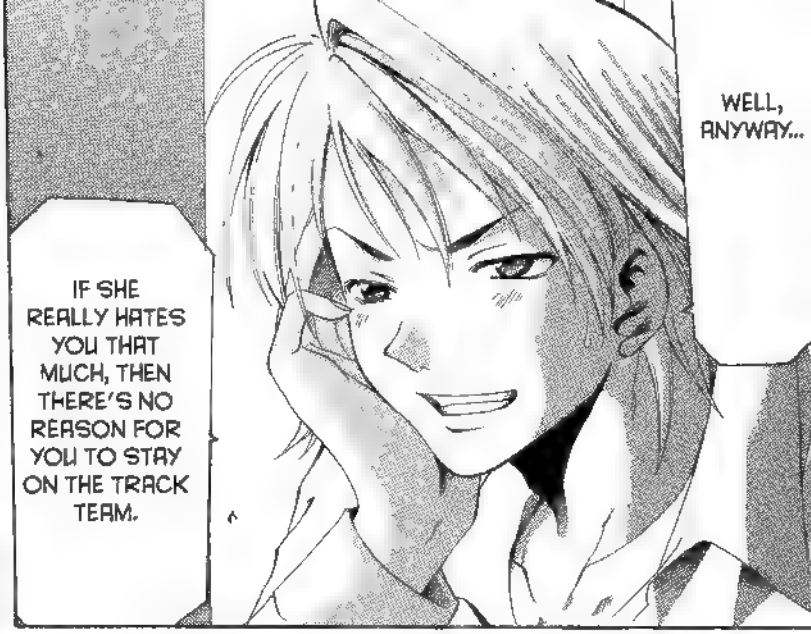
EH?


UH... HELLO? I WASN'T EVEN TALKING TO YOU!
YEAH, I DO. I MEAN HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO REACT TO THAT?
YOU GOT A PROBLEM W TH WHAT I SAID?

OH, SORRY... SHE JUST REMINDED ME OF THIS CHICK I KNOW.
AH...
HEY, WHAT'RE YOU GUYS TALKING ABOUT?

!!
OH GOD! I HATE WHEN CHICKS SAY STUFF LIKE THAT.
HOW ANNOY-ING.
TCH

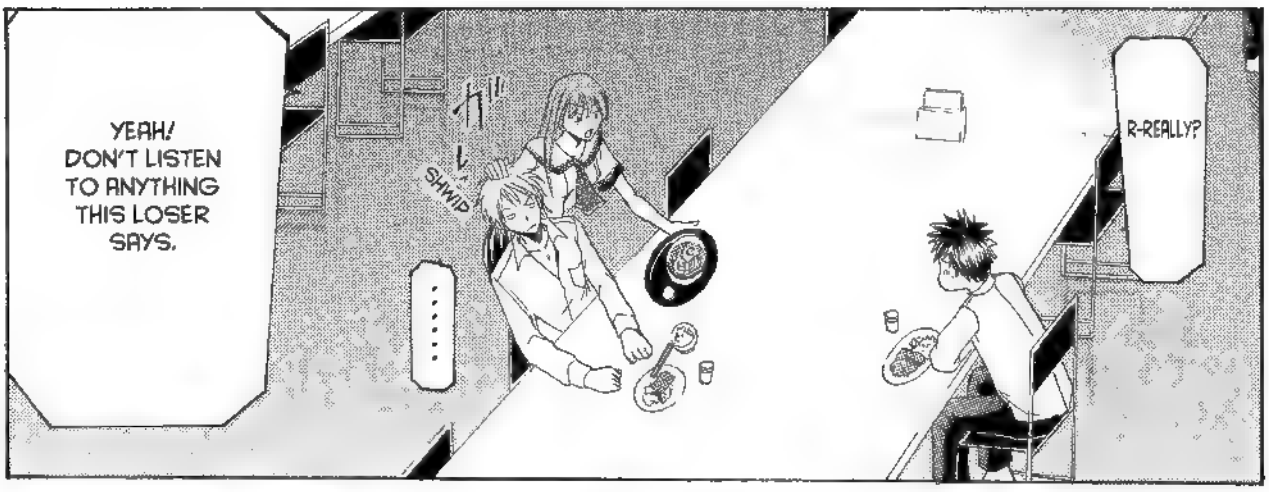
YEAH?
I MEAN, YOU JOINED TO GET HER TO LIKE YOU, RIGHT? BUT IT ENDED UP BACKFIRING, SO...


IF SHE REALLY HATES YOU THAT MUCH, THEN THERE'S NO REASON FOR YOU TO STAY ON THE TRACK TEAM.
WELL, ANYWAY...

YEAH, BUT HE DOESN'T EVEN CARE ABOUT TRACK.
SHUT UP, YOU IDIOT!
HE CAN'T QUIT. HE RAN THE 100-METER DASH IN UNDER ELEVEN SECONDS.

WHAT SUZUKA HATES IS WHEN GUYS START SOMETHING AND DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH.
TRUST ME. I'M HER FRIEND, I OUGHTA KNOW.

I MEAN, EVEN IF HE BROKE A WORLD'S RECORD, IF SUZUKA-CHAN HATES HIM, IT'D ALL BE MEANINGLESS.
NO!


YEAH! DON'T LISTEN TO ANYTHING THIS LOSER SAYS.
SHWIP
R-REALLY?

YOU! THAT'S WHO. YOU'RE NOT IN ANY CLUBS. YOU'RE NOT ON ANY TEAMS. YOU DON'T DO ANYTHING.
SWIP
HEY! WHO'RE YOU CALLING A LOSER?

WHY DON'T YOU TRY BUTTONING UP YOUR SHIRT? IS YOUR CHEST HAIR SUPPOSED TO TURN ME ON OR SOMETHING?
'CAUSE I'M HOT, DAMN IT!

I'VE GOT MY OWN STUFF GOING ON!
I CAN'T BELIEVE THE TRACK TEAM LETS YOU GROW YOUR HAIR OUT THAT LONG!
MY FAVORITE PRO RUNNER HAS LONG HAIR JUST LIKE MINE, SO SCREW YOU!

HUH?
I THINK I'LL STAY ON THE TEAM.

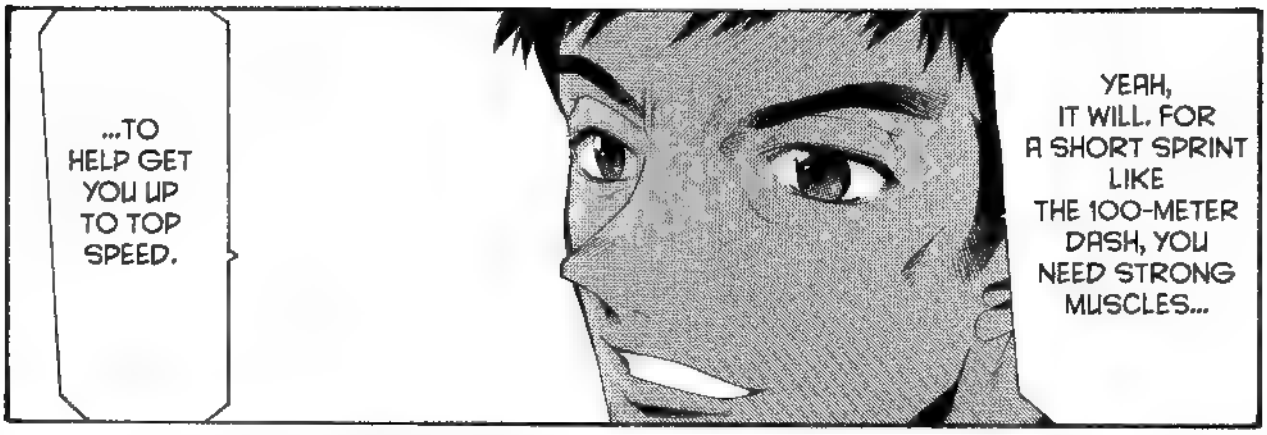
I MEAN, IT'S NOT LIKE I HAVE ANYTHING ELSE TO DO ANYWAY.
BESIDES, HOW ELSE AM I GONNA GET HER TO LIKE ME?

HEY WHAT'RE YOU GUYS TALKING ABOUT?

Y-YOU MEAN IT?
REALLY?

HEY SAKURAI-SAN...
YEAH.
WHAT?
AH, IT'S NOTHING, FORGET IT.
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HER LONG HAIR/HIS UNBUTTONED SHIRT?
HUH?
EH?
WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
THAT'S RIGHT, MY ONLY HOPE IS TO...

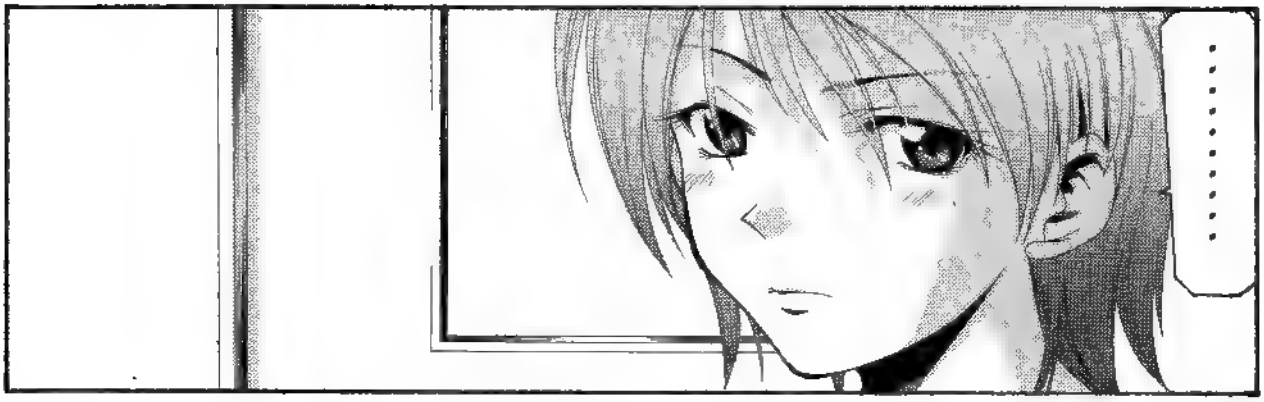
ALL RIGHT! THAT'S ENOUGH!
GYM
...GET EVEN FASTER!
HAHH!
CLANK
HEY, CAPTAIN! WILL WORKING OUT LIKE THIS REALLY HELP ME RUN THE 100-METER DASH FASTER?
NO, THANKS.
WOW, AKITSUKI. YOU BENCHED 180 POUNDS.
WANNA GO THROW THE MEDICINE BALL AROUND?


...TO HELP GET YOU UP TO TOP SPEED.
YEAH, IT WILL. FOR A SHORT SPRINT LIKE THE 100-METER DASH, YOU NEED STRONG MUSCLES...

OKAY, BUT DON'T OVERDO IT.
WON'T!
.....
ALL RIGHT THEN. I'M GONNA STAY BEHIND, AND DO SOME TRAINING ON MY OWN.

YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT. WE'LL WORK OUT WITH YOU.
I MEAN, I'M YOUR SENPAI, I CAN'T LET YOU WORK OUT ALL BY YOURSELF.

HEY, KOBAYAKAWA! YOU'RE IN EVERYONE'S WAY!
MOVE IT.
I'LL STAY HERE, AND WORK OUT WITH YOU, AKITSUKI.
HUH?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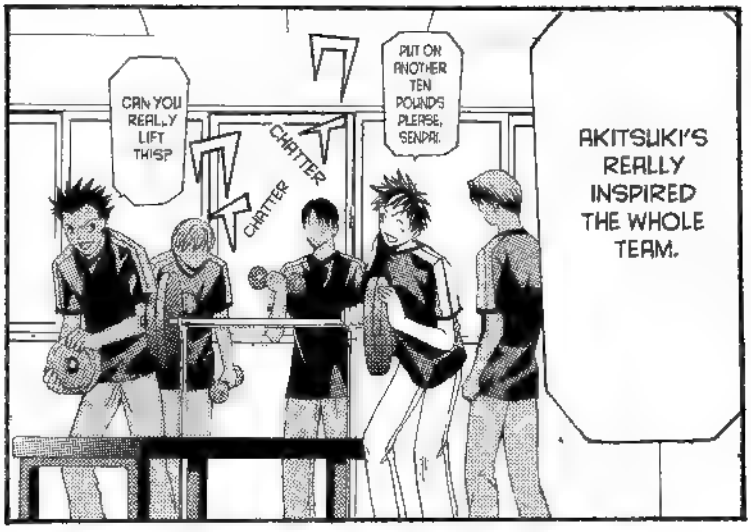
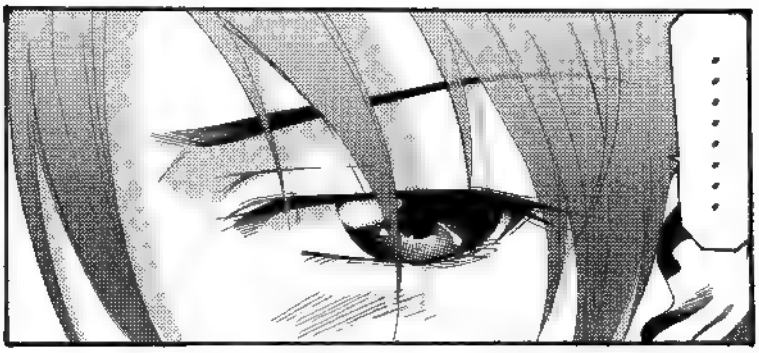

CAN YOU REALLY LIFT THIS?
PUT ON ANOTHER TEN POUNDS PLEASE, SENPAI.
CHATTER
CHATTER
AKITSUKI'S REALLY INSPIRED THE WHOLE TEAM.

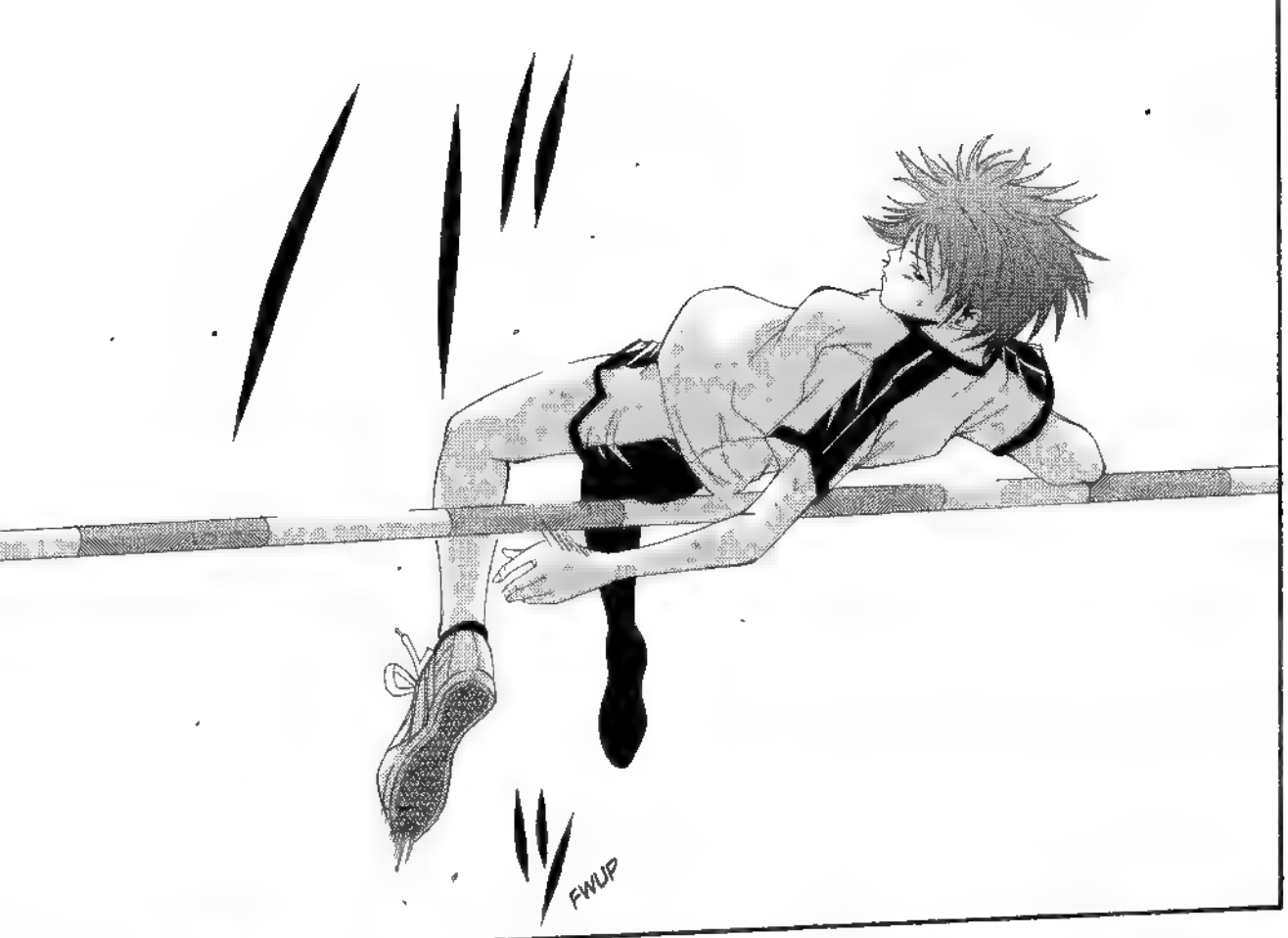
THINGS ARE STARTING TO LOOK UP.
MIYAMA-MOTO-SENPAI.

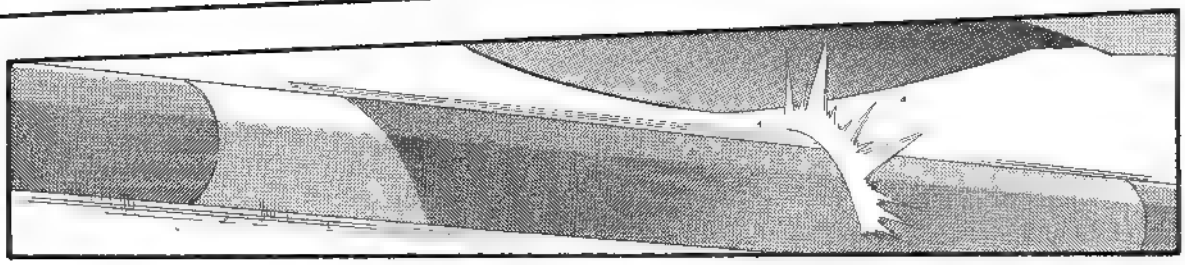
NO PROBLEM.

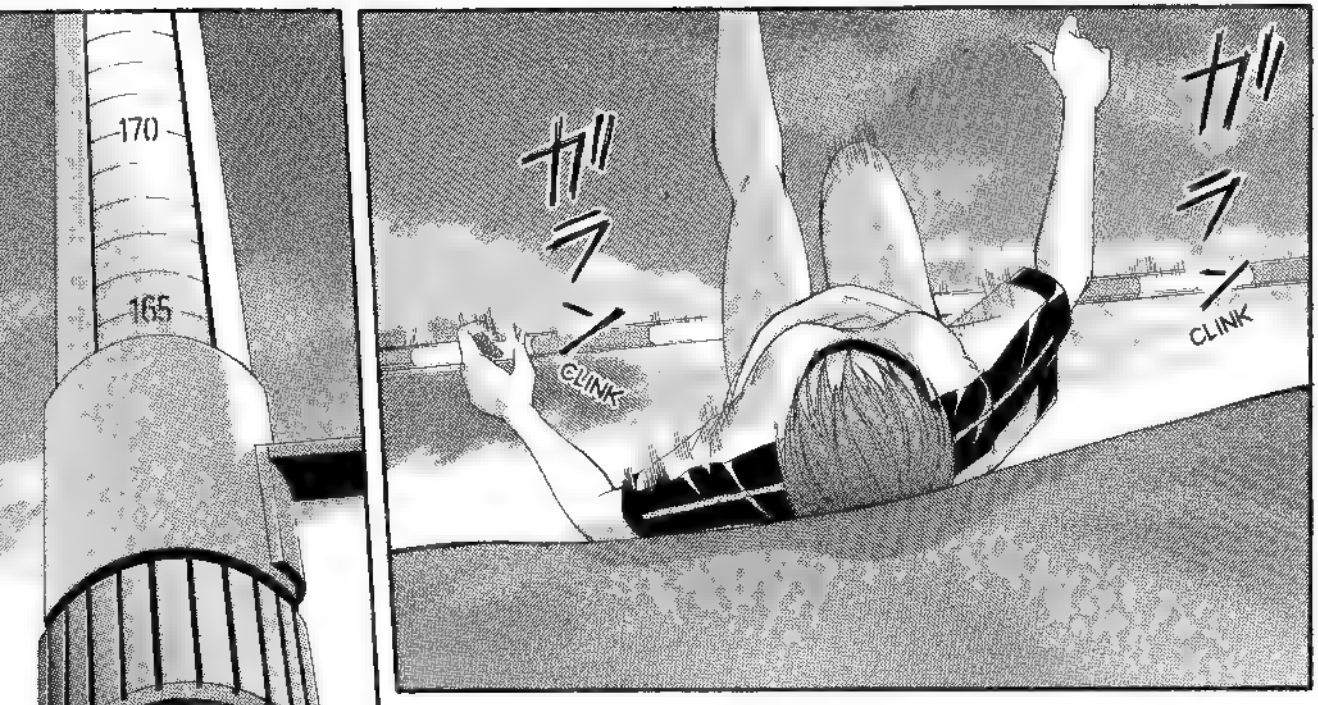

.....

THIS TAKES ME RIGHT BACK TO JUNIOR HIGH.
ピク
SHIVER
I MEAN, DOESN'T AKITSUKI KIND OF REMIND YOU OF...
...KAZUKI TSUDA?
.....

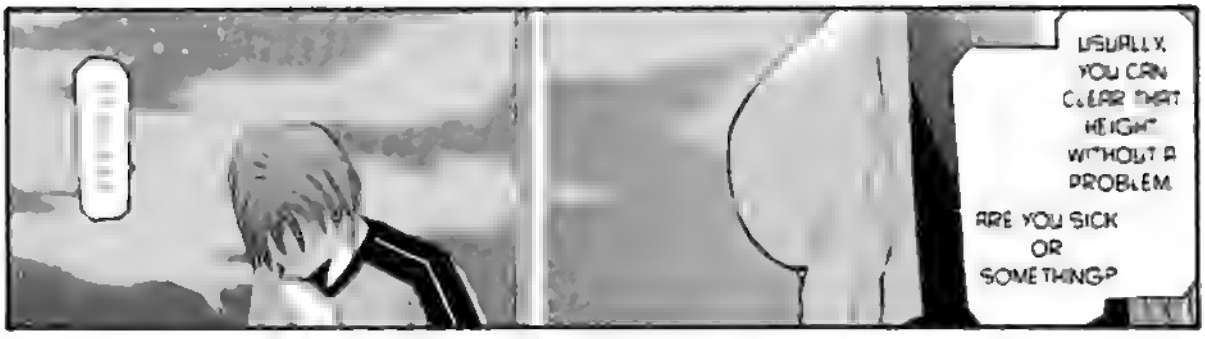
I'M...
...GONNA GO DO SOME MORE TRAINING OUTSIDE.
H-HEY, ASAHINA...
STEP
UH... OKAY.
CLICK
SLAM


FWUP

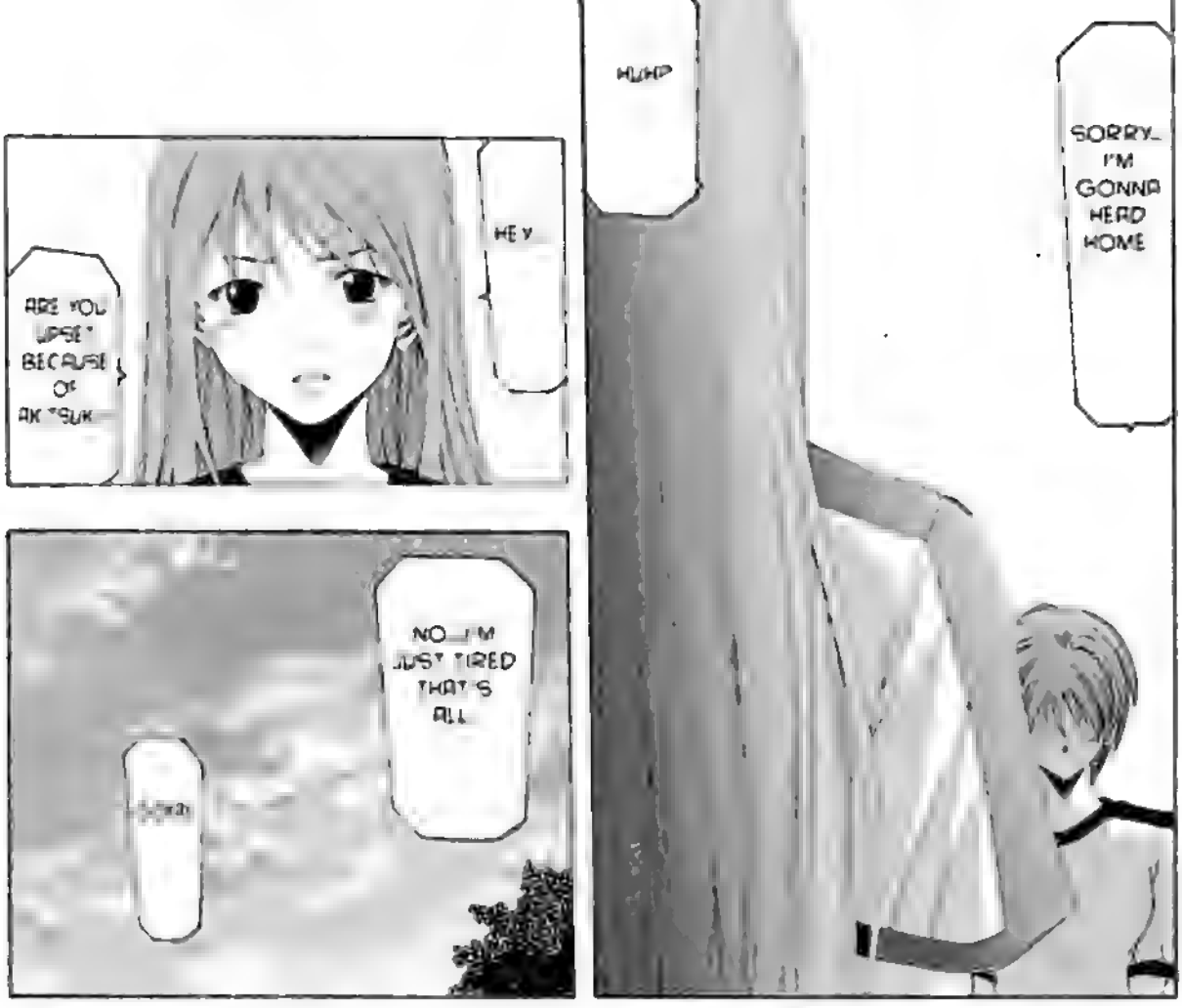


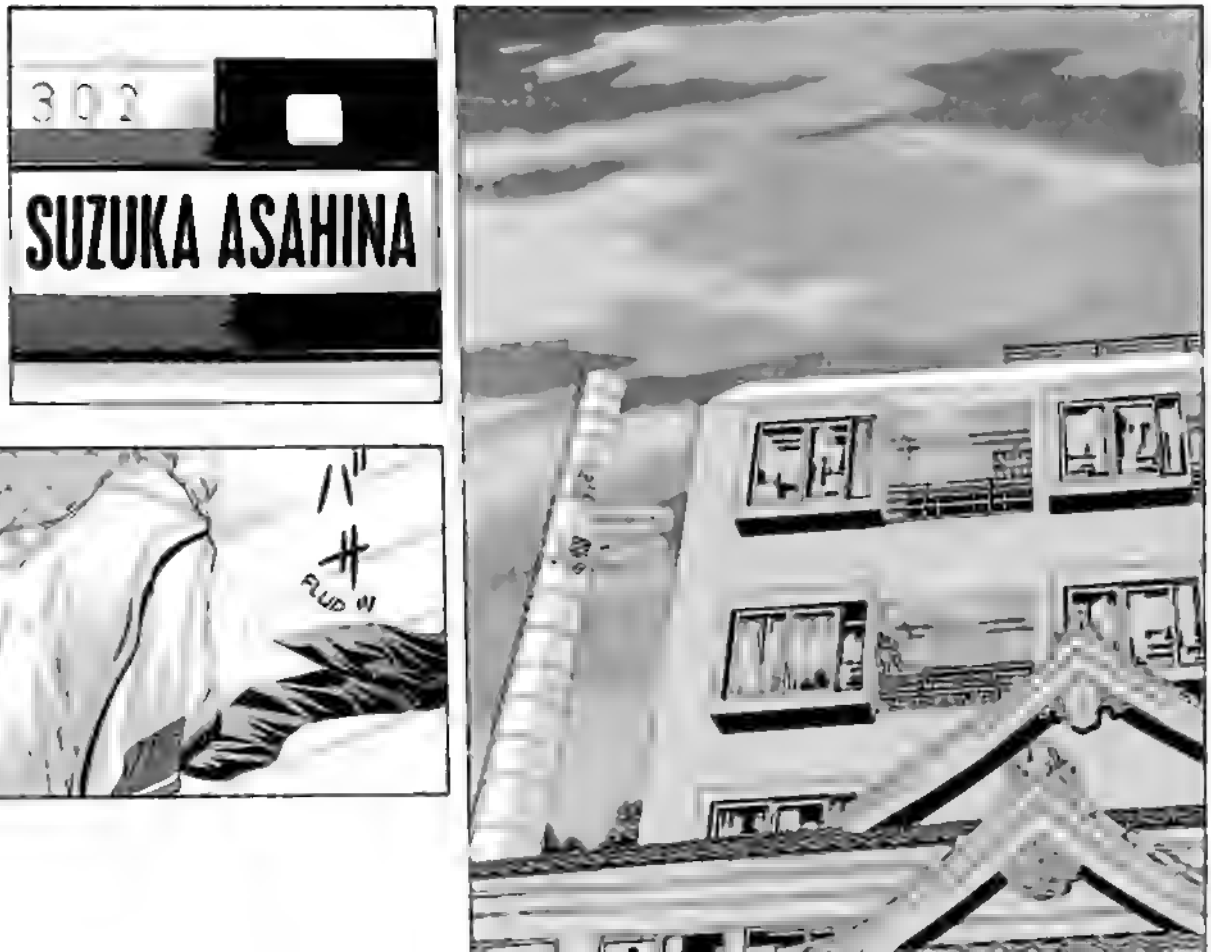

170
165
カリラン
CLINK
カリラン
CLINK

WHAT'S WRONG, SUZUKA?
HMM?


USUALLY YOU CAN CLEAR THAT HEIGHT WITHOUT A PROBLEM.
ARE YOU SICK OR SOMETHING?

IT'S NOTHING I'M FINE
ARE YOU SURE? THE COMPETITION IS COMING UP SO YOU'D BETTER PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER


HEY
ARE YOU UPSET BECAUSE OF AKITSUKI
NO... I'M JUST TIRED THAT'S ALL
HUMP
SORRY... I'M GONNA HEAD HOME


302
SUZUKA ASAHINA

THUD
PWUD
THIS SUCKS
I'M SO PISSED
PWUMP

NOT AT ALL!
...KAZUKI TSUDA?
DOESN'T AKITSUKI REMIND YOU OF...
.....
HE'S NOTHING...
...LIKE KAZUKI.
1

CHARACTER PROFILE NO. 7

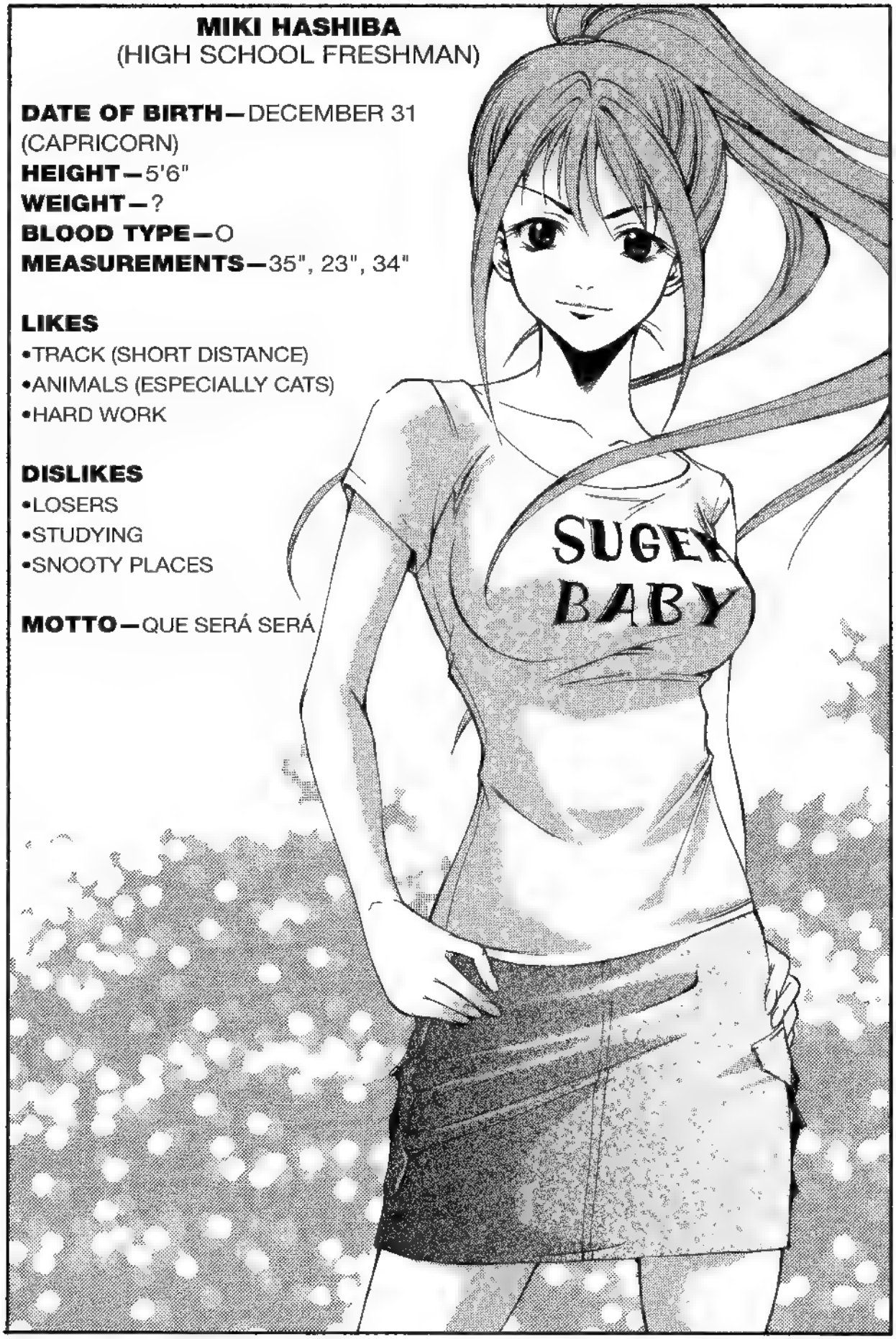
MIKI HASHIBA
(HIGH SCHOOL FRESHMAN)

DATE OF BIRTH—DECEMBER 31
(CAPRICORN)
HEIGHT—5'6"
WEIGHT—?
BLOOD TYPE—O
MEASUREMENTS—35", 23", 34"

LIKES
- TRACK (SHORT DISTANCE)
- ANIMALS (ESPECIALLY CATS)
- HARD WORK

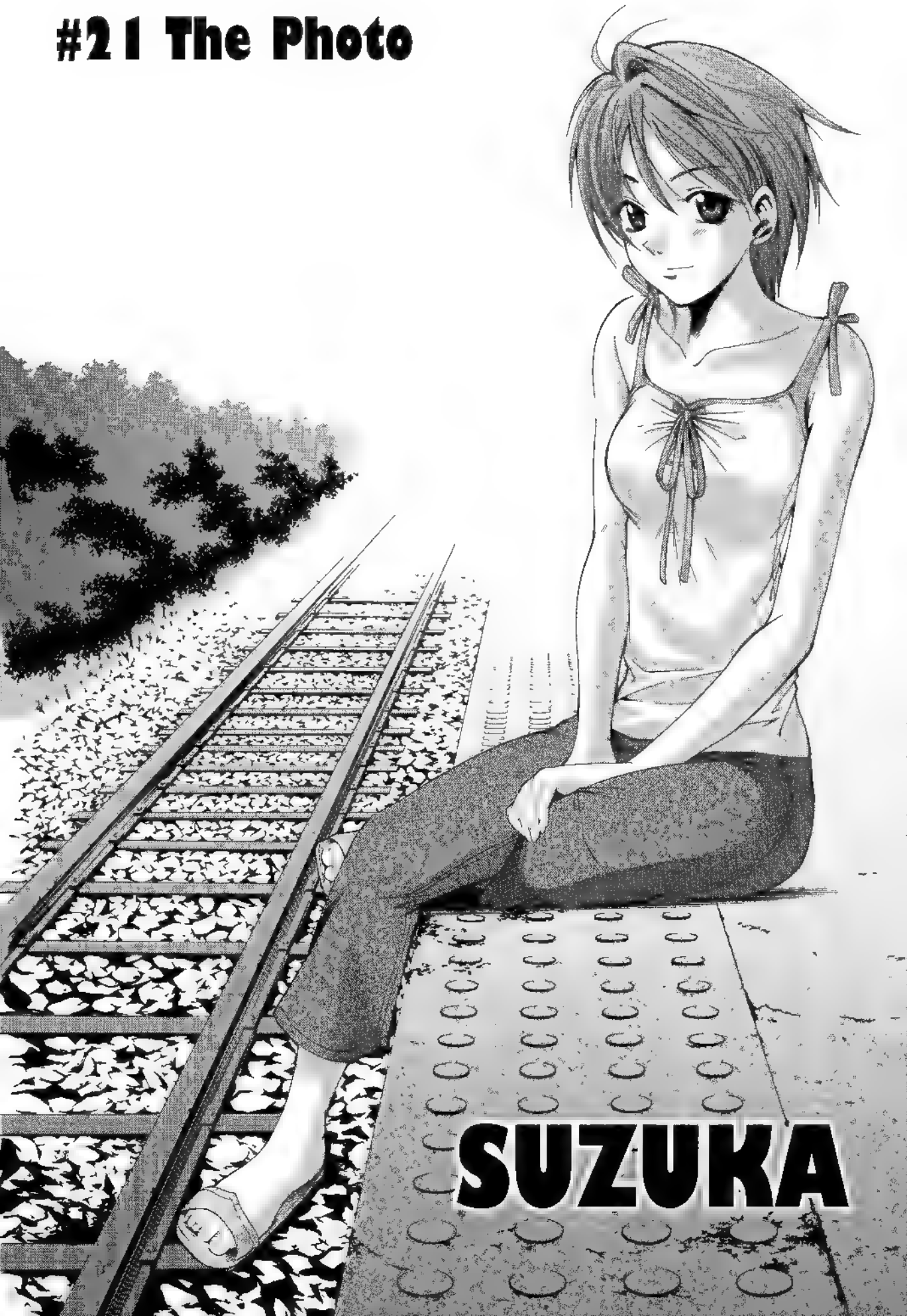
DISLIKES
- LOSERS
- STUDYING
- SNOOTY PLACES

MOTTO—QUE SERÁ SERÁ



OKAY, THAT'S IT FOR TODAY!
LET'S GO EAT!
WOO! FINALLY!
ALL RIGHT. NO PRACTICE TOMORROW
I'M GIVING YOU GUYS THE DAY OFF TOMORROW SO YOU CAN GET READY FOR THE REGIONALS
I WANT YOU ALL TO REST UP
YES, CAPTAIN!
THE DAY OFF...
.....

#21 The Photo

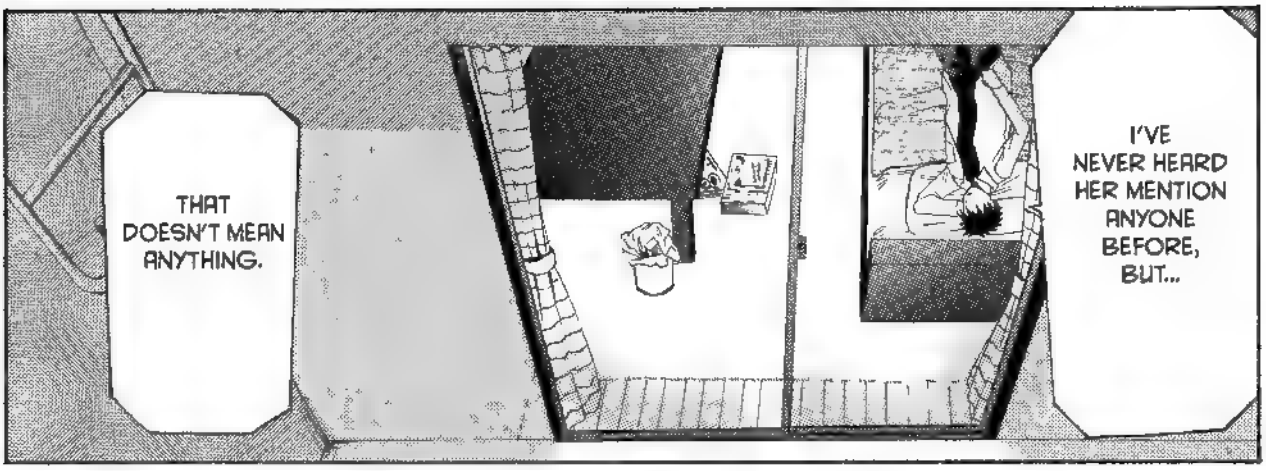


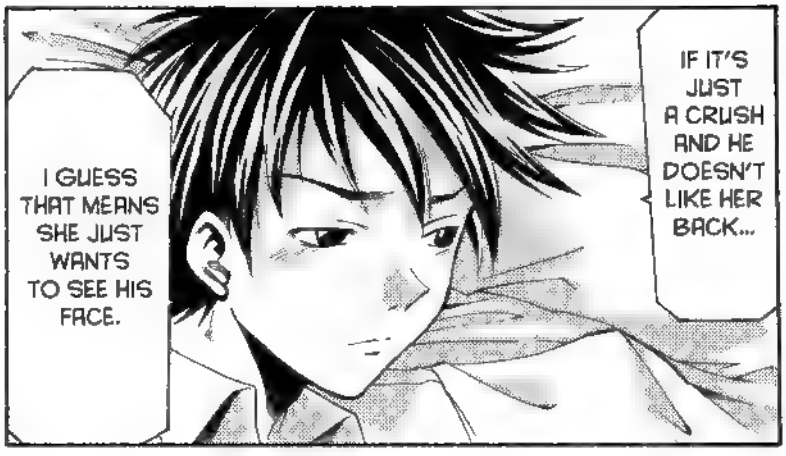
A DAY OFF, I WISH I COULD DO SOMETHING...
...WITH ASAHINA.
AH.
OH YEAH, AYANO-SAN ASKED ME TO DO SOME SHOPPING FOR HER.
I COULD ASK ASAHINA... BUT SHE'D NEVER COME ALONG.
SHE WOULDN'T WANNA WASTE HER DAY OFF WITH ME.
BUT I GUESS I MIGHT AS WELL ASK HER...
MAYBE SHE'S BORED, TOO.
1-A
YOU'RE GOING HOME?
HUH?

IT'S ASAHINA AND MIYAMOTO-SENPAI.
OH!
BECAUSE OF KAZUKI?
SINCE WE HAVE SOME TIME OFF, I THOUGHT I'D GO BACK...
...TO YOKOHAMA.
YOKO-HAMA?

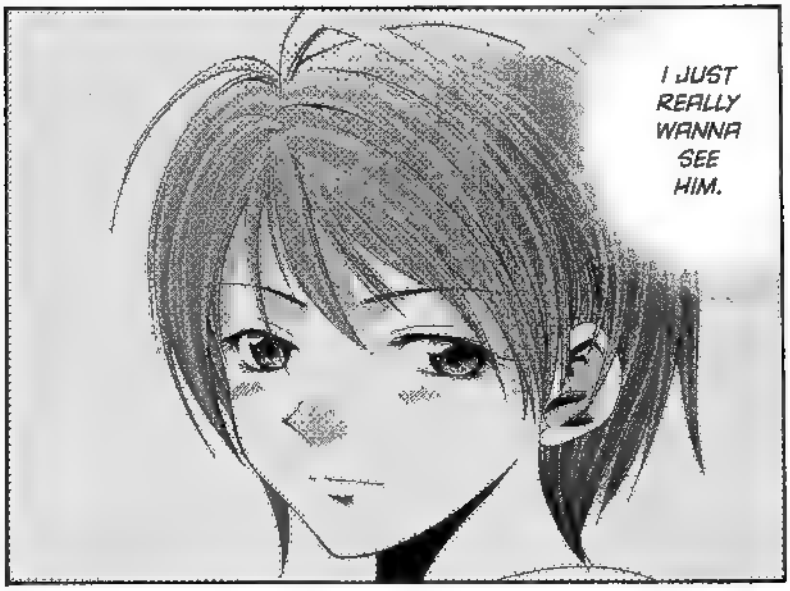
...YEAH.
I JUST REALLY WANNA SEE HIM.
KAZUKI?
THUMP
ドクン
THUMP
WH—
WELL, SAY HI TO HIM FOR ME.
I WILL.
WHO'S KAZUKI?
ASAHIYU BATHS

KAZUKI...
MAYBE IT'S...HER OLDER BROTHER...
BUT SHE'S GOING HOME JUST TO SEE HIM.
IT'S GOTTA BE HER BOYFR END... OR MAYBE SOME GUY SHE HAS A CRUSH ON.
EITHER WAY, THAT MEANS...
SHE'S IN LOVE WITH SOMEBODY.
ROLL


THAT DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING.
I'VE NEVER HEARD HER MENTION ANYONE BEFORE, BUT...


I GUESS THAT MEANS SHE JUST WANTS TO SEE HIS FACE.
IF IT'S JUST A CRUSH AND HE DOESN'T LIKE HER BACK...

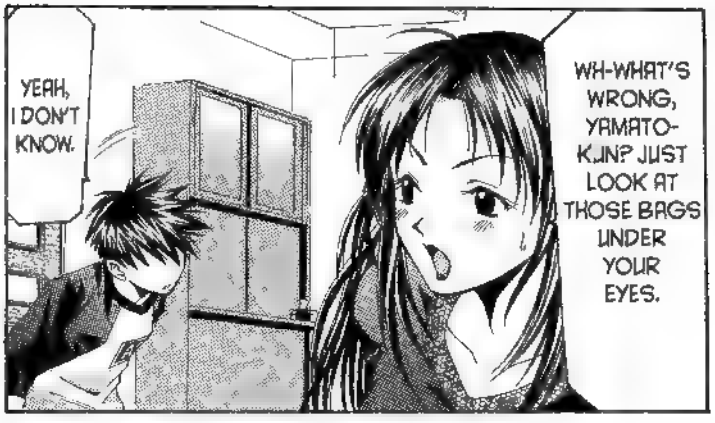
SO I GUESS SHE'S GOING BACK FOR A DATE.
OR...


I JUST REALLY WANNA SEE HIM.

STING
スキ…

...YOU'RE JUST GONNA WEIGH THE TEAM DOWN.
IF YOU JOIN UP WITH THAT ATTITUDE...
SORRY...
WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS...
I HATE YOU, YAMATO-KUN!
I THOUGHT I COULD TAKE ANYTHING FROM HER, BUT...
I JUST CAN'T HANDLE THE THOUGHT OF ASAHINA OBSESSING OVER SOME OTHER GUY.

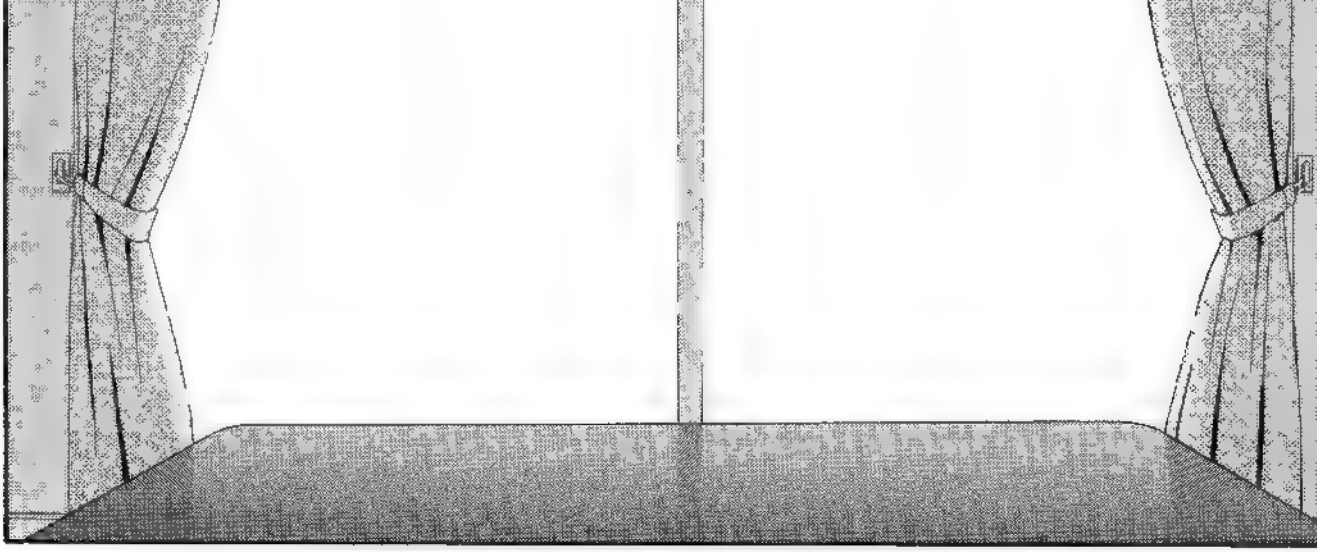
ASAHIYU
BATHS
湯


YEAH, I DON'T KNOW.
WH-WHAT'S WRONG, YAMATO-KUN? JUST LOOK AT THOSE BAGS UNDER YOUR EYES.

I WAS UP ALL NIGHT THINKING ABOUT ASAHINA...I DIDN'T SLEEP A WINK.
SPACED OUT

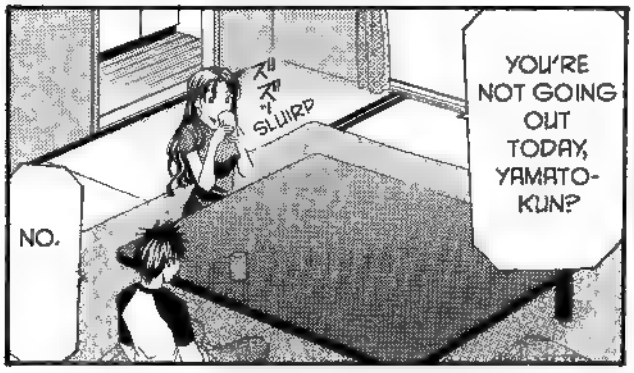
CAN I HAVE SOME TEA, AYANO-SAN?
SURE, HANG ON.
CLOP
CLOP

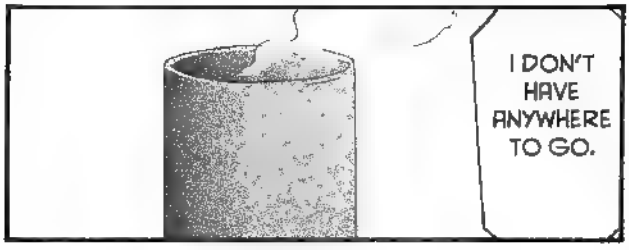
GOOD MORNING.
カリ!!
SLIDE
AT&I



IS ASAHINA STILL SLEEPING?
HEY..

SO SHE DID GO TO SEE HIM.
OH, OKAY.


NO.
ズズッ SLURP
YOU'RE NOT GOING OUT TODAY, YAMATO-KUN?


I DON'T HAVE ANYWHERE TO GO.

SUZUKA-CHAN?
NO, SHE WENT OUT A LITTLE BIT AGO.
SHE SAID SHE HAD SOMETHING TO TAKE CARE OF BACK HOME.
コト
CLINK

PURR
PURR
12
11
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
FWUFF
MEOW? WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
YOU FAT, OLD CAT!
HEY, WHERE'RE YOU GOING? TO THE BATHROOM?
ASAHINA'S...
...PROBABLY ALREADY IN YOKOHAMA BY NOW, GORO-CHAN.
MEOW
WAH!
STUPID CAT! DON'T GO INTO ASAHINA'S ROOM!
SCHWICK
CLANK!

WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU?
FWUMP
IF ASAHINA SAW ME IN HERE...
HEY, COME BACK HERE! THIS IS BREAKING AND ENTERING... EVEN IF YOU ARE JUST A CAT.
CLOP
CLOP
MEOW
HUH?

IS THAT...

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT...

THIS IS THE GUY THAT ASAHINA IS IN LOVE WITH.
AHHH
SUZUKA-CHAN'S FAMILY'S HOUSE?
WELL, I DO HAVE HER ADDRESS WRITTEN DOWN.
OOPS, SORRY!
KYAA
BONK
AT&I

I DON'T KNOW!
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO AT SUZUKA-CHAN'S, YAMATO-KUN?
...WHAT I'LL SAY TO HER!
ゴトン CLACK
ゴトン CLACK
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I'LL DO WHEN I SEE ASAHINA, OR...
BUT...
I JUST HAVE TO GO SEE HER!

のりば

OKAY, I CAME HERE ON A WHIM...

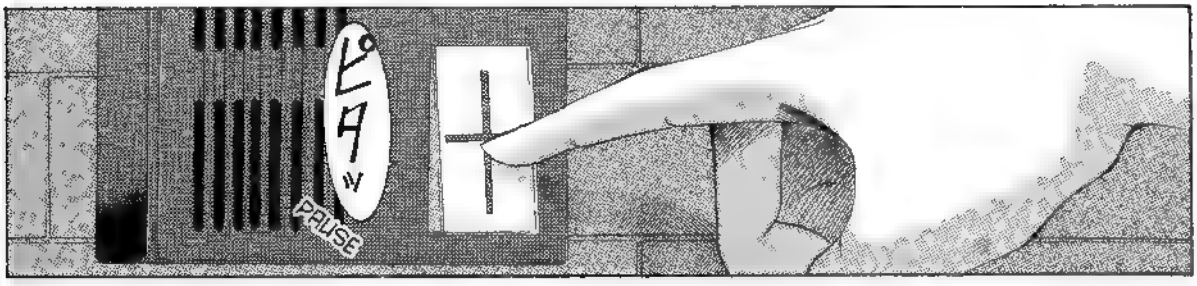
WAH, IT'S SO HOT!
NOW I'VE GOT TO FIGURE OUT JUST WHAT THE HELL I'M GONNA DO.
AT&I
WHAT-EVER...
I'LL JUST THINK IT OVER WHILE I WALK.

ASAHINA

AT&T

WHAT'S WITH THIS HOUSE?
I-IS SHE RICH OR SOMETHING?

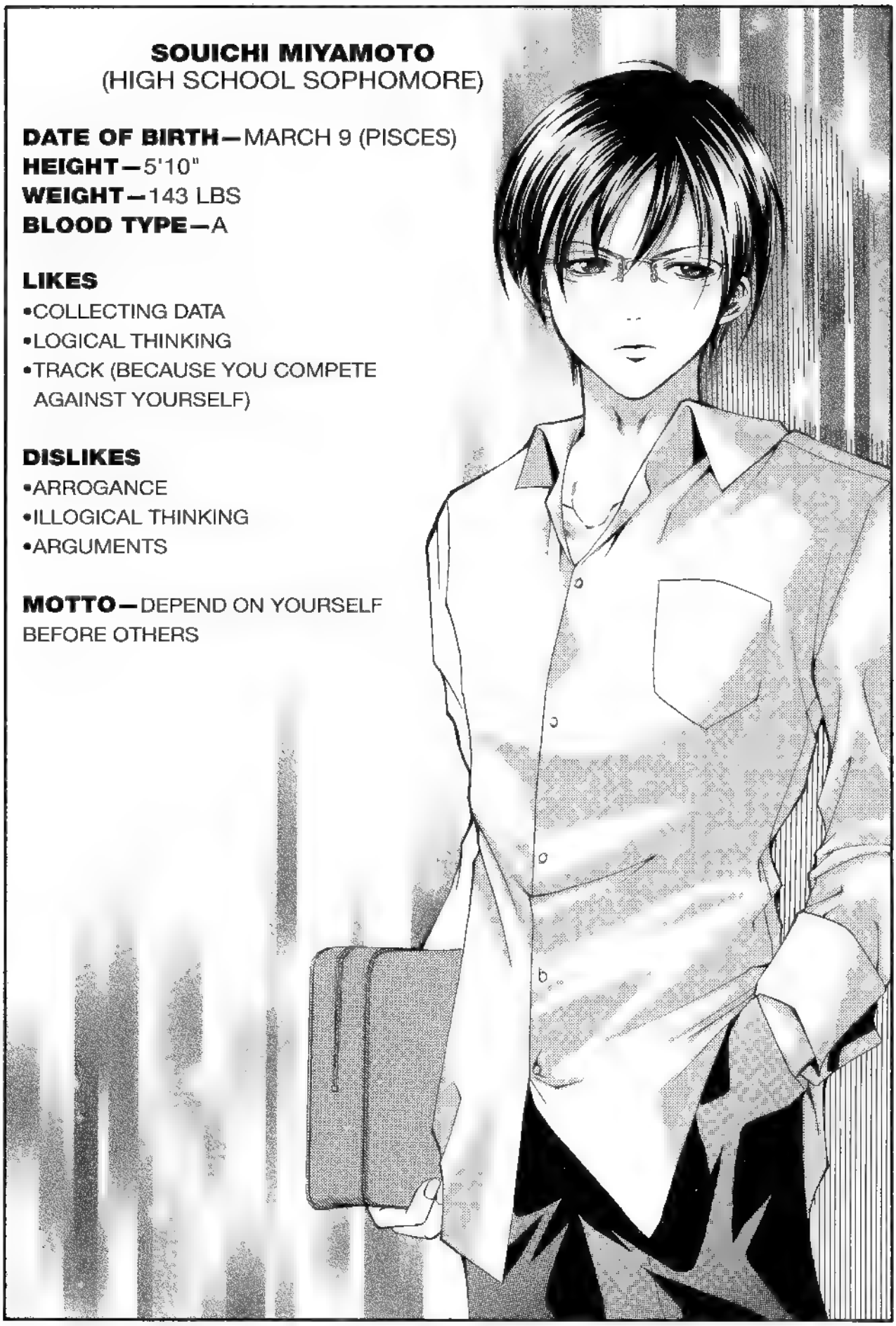
I WONDER IF SHE'S HOME.
ゴクッ
GULP
MAN... WHY AM I SO NERVOUS? I FEEL LIKE MY HEART'S GONNA JUMP RIGHT OUT OF MY CHEST.
I MEAN, HERE I AM... IN FRONT OF ASAHINA'S HOUSE.


ピタ
PAUSE

コソ
STEP
I'M SUCH A LOSER!
WAIT... I HAVEN'T EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT I'LL SAY WHEN SHE COMES TO THE DOOR.
OH MY GOD...I REALLY AM TURNING INTO A STALKER...

HUH?
WH WHO'S SHE?
CAN I HELP YOU WITH SOMETHING?

CHARACTER PROFILE NO. 8



SOUICHI MIYAMOTO
(HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORE)

DATE OF BIRTH—MARCH 9 (PISCES)
HEIGHT—5'10"
WEIGHT—143 LBS
BLOOD TYPE—A

LIKES
- COLLECTING DATA
- LOGICAL THINKING
- TRACK (BECAUSE YOU COMPETE AGAINST YOURSELF)

DISLIKES
- ARROGANCE
- ILLOGICAL THINKING
- ARGUMENTS

MOTTO—DEPEND ON YOURSELF BEFORE OTHERS

I SAID...
...CAN I HELP YOU WITH SOMETHING?
UH...
UM...I...

#22 Rivals [in] Love

恋

SUZUKA

I-I LIVE NEXT DOOR TO SUZUKA-SAN..
UH...I'M A FRIEND OF HERS!
OF SUZU-KA'S...?
UH... WELL...I WAS JUST PASSING BY SO I THOUGHT I'D STOP BY FOR A CHAT.
SO? WHAT DO YOU WANT?
.....
SOUNDS LIKE A LOAD OF CRAP OF ME!
ARE YOU REALLY SUZUKA'S FRIEND?
UH... YEAH...
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
OH... I'M YAMATO AKITSUKI.
AKITSUKI?

WELL, I'VE NEVER HEARD OF YOU.
ガラ
ガラ
SLIDE
DID YOU JUST MAKE THAT UP?
SHE SURE IS SUSPICIOUS.
ARE YOU....
GLANCE
...STALKING SUZUKA OR SOMETHING?
SHOCK
N–
NO, I'M NOT!
GET HIM, MUKU!
WAAAHH!
#ャワー!
GRAWL
FWIP
.....
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU...

R-REALLY! I WAS JUST PASSING BY, THAT'S ALL!
IS THAT SO?
GYAA!
CHOMP
BITE HIS ACHILLES TENDON, SO HE CAN'T RUN AWAY.
GYAA!
CHOMP
CHOMP
FWUMP
BITE HIM IN THE HEAD, MUKU!
...IN LOVE WITH SUZUKA, AREN'T YOU?
YOU'RE...
R-REALLY...
.....
HAHH
I JUST WANTED TO TALK TO...
HAHH
H-HUH?
WELL, ARE YOU?
PAT
GLARE
SHE'S EVEN WORSE THAN YULKA-SAN.

I HEARD SHE WAS COMING HOME TO SEE SOME GUY NAMED KAZUKI.
I-I'M JUST A LITTLE WORRIED ABOUT HER, THAT'S ALL.

KAZUKI?

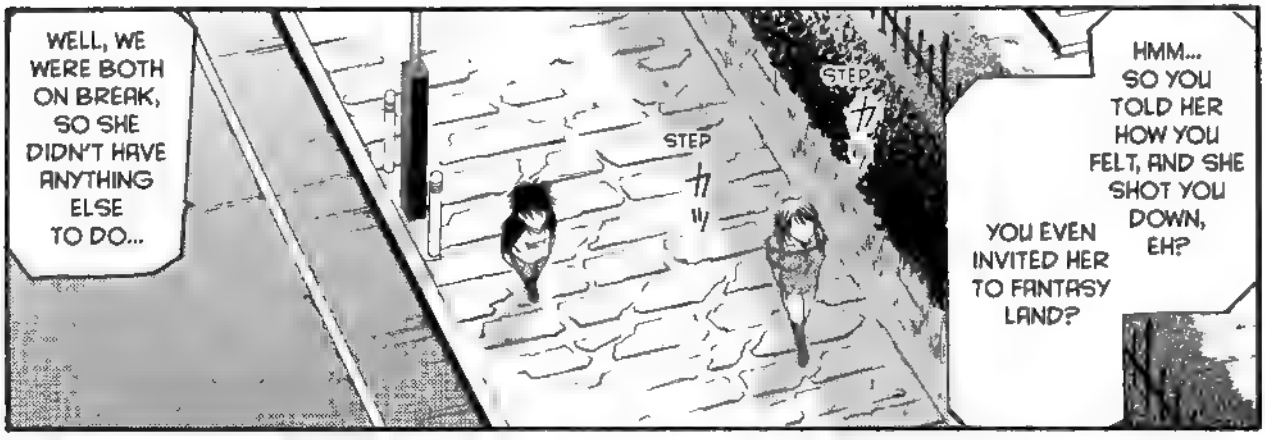
OH I GET IT.
YOU COULDN'T STAND THE THOUGHT OF SUZUKA SEEING ANOTHER GUY, SO YOU CAME CHASING AFTER HER.

.....
AT&I

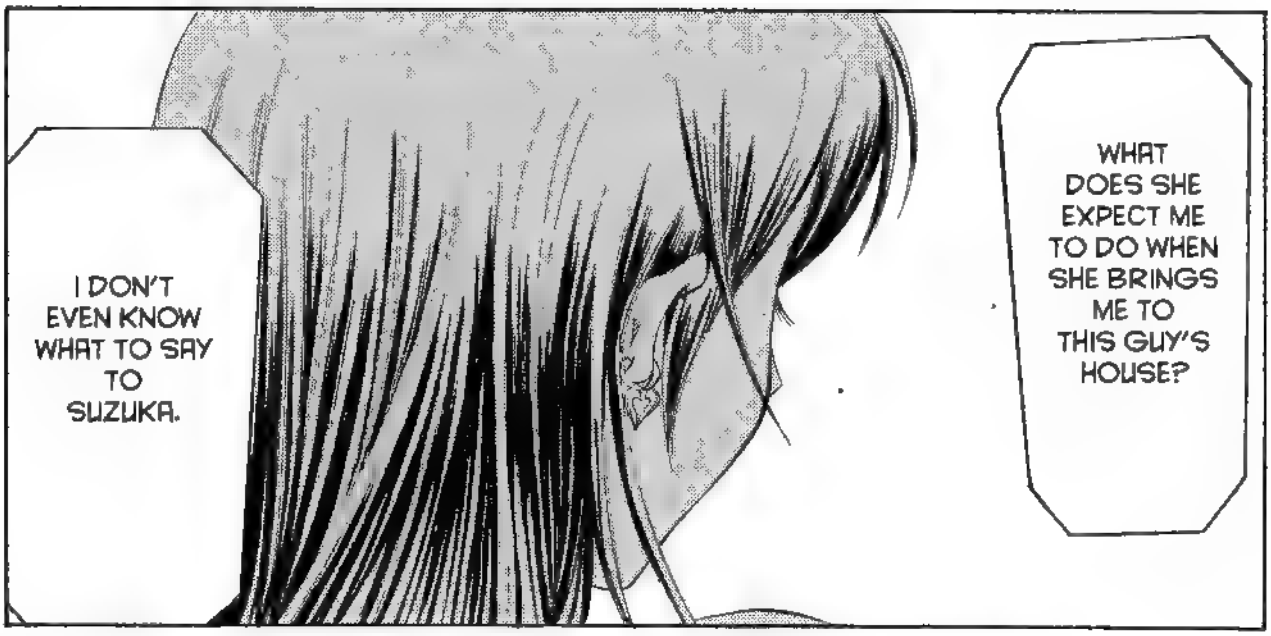
カ
BLUSH
.....

IF SHE REALLY DID COME HOME, THEN SHE'S PROBABLY OVER AT KAZUKI'S RIGHT NOW.
NEVER MIND. I'LL JUST GO HOME...
FOLLOW ME.
YOU DON'T SEEM LIKE TOO BAD A GUY, SO I'LL TAKE YOU OVER THERE.
HUH?
OH, I'M SUZUNE ASAHINA, BY THE WAY. I'M SUZUKA'S OLDER SISTER.
NICE TO MEET YOU.
Y-YEAH.
UH...
BUT...
AT&T

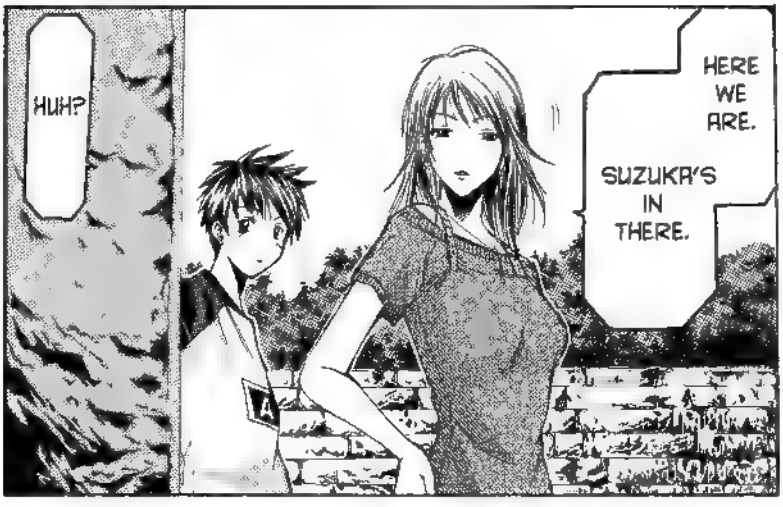
30
ROCHO


WELL, WE WERE BOTH ON BREAK, SO SHE DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING ELSE TO DO...
STEP
STEP
HMM... SO YOU TOLD HER HOW YOU FELT, AND SHE SHOT YOU DOWN, EH?
YOU EVEN INVITED HER TO FANTASY LAND?

.....
WHAT IS UP WITH THIS CHICK?
WELL... OKAY.
I CAN SEE THAT YOU REALLY DO CARE ABOUT SUZUKA.
AND EVEN THOUGH YOU GOT SHOT DOWN, YOU'RE NOT GIVING UP?
UH...
NOPE.

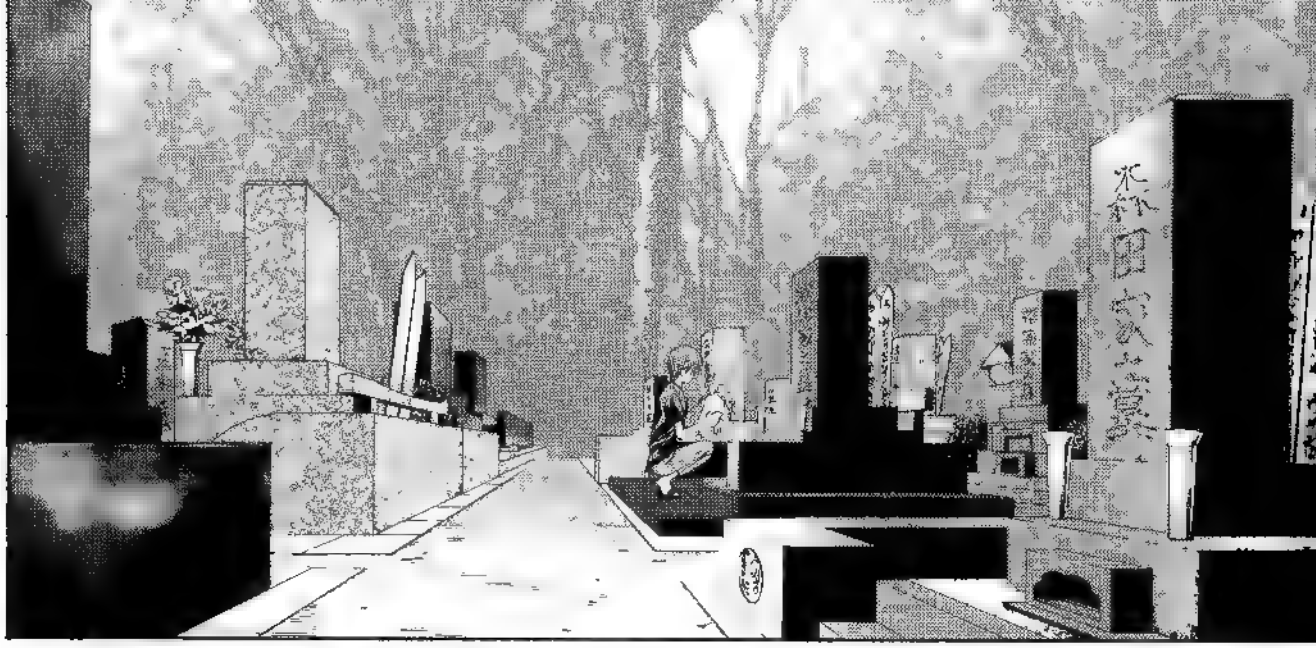

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO SAY TO SUZUKA.
WHAT DOES SHE EXPECT ME TO DO WHEN SHE BRINGS ME TO THIS GUY'S HOUSE?

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE?
ASAHINA'S JUST GONNA END UP HATING ME EVEN MORE.


HUH?
HERE WE ARE.
SUZUKA'S IN THERE.

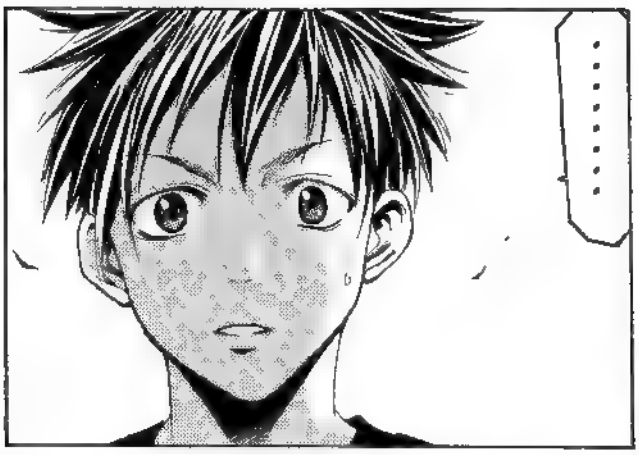
GOING TO SEE HER ISN'T GONNA HELP ANYTHING...
Y-YOU KNOW... I THINK I'LL JUST GO HOME...

.....!
WHA-?



IT'S BEEN ABOUT TWO YEARS... EVERY TIME SHE HAS A DAY OFF, SHE COMES HERE TO PRAY.
.....
AT&I

HE DIED IN AN ACCIDENT.
TSSS
WAIT, SO...
YOU MEAN KAZUKI IS...


.....

...YEAH.
I JUST REALLY WANNA SEE HIM.

SO THE GUY ASAHINA CAME ALL THIS WAY TO SEE...
...IS....

HE WAS ON THE WAY TO THE FINAL COMPETITION FOR HIS JUNIOR HIGH TRACK TEAM.
KAZUKI TSUDA
A TRUCKER FELL ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL, AND RAN A RED LIGHT.

スッ!

THIS MIGHT SOUND WEIRD BUT...

FOR SOME REASON, HER DAY DREAMING FIGURED MORE BEAUTIFUL
AND MORE MATURE
THAN EVER

KAZUKI WAS A GRADE AHEAD OF SUZUKA. HE WAS THE STAR OF THE TRACK TEAM.
SUZUKA REALLY LOOKED UP TO HIM.
SHE MUST STILL HAVE...
...FEELINGS FOR HIM...

.....
100-METER DASH?
TWO-FOOTED LAUNCH?
HE HAD THE REGIONAL RECORD FOR THE 100-METER DASH.
HE WAS FAMOUS FOR HIS TWO-FOOTED LAUNCH.
WELL...HE WAS FAMOUS FOR TRACK, BUT WHEN HE WASN'T ON THE FIELD...
HE WAS A REAL KLUTZ.

YEP...
HE LOOKED A LOT LIKE YOU.
.....!
WELL, IT WAS GOOD TO MEET YOU...
YOU'RE DEFINITELY ASAHINA'S TYPE.
EVERYBODY WHO KNEW KAZUKI TSUDA MUST THINK I'M JUST LIKE HIM.
DO WE REALLY LOOK THAT MUCH ALIKE?
SO ANYWAY, SUZUKA'S PROBABLY JUST...

I'M GOING HOME.
DON'T TELL HER I WAS HERE.
STEP
HEY, WAIT!
AH...
HYUU
HYUU
AT&

ゴトン
CLICK
ゴトン
CLACK
ゴトン
CLICK
ゴトン
CLACK
.....
YAMATO-KUN...
...SURE IS FAST.
WELL, ANYWAY... YOU'RE FAST, DUDE.
AND, WHEN SUZUKA-CHAN SAW YOU RUN LIKE THAT, SHE TOOK NOTICE.
GRIP
SHE DID NOT.

SHE WASN'T...
...WATCHING ME.
...REMEMBERING KAZUKI.
SHE WAS JUST...
HOW COULD I BE SO STUPID?
...THAT I MIGHT HAVE A CHANCE...
AND THERE I WAS THINKING THAT SHE MIGHT ACTUALLY LIKE ME...

WHY DO YOU KEEP COMING BACK HERE?
SUZUKA...
.....
SUZUKA...
HE'S DEAD, SUZUKA, AND THINKING ABOUT HIM ALL THE TIME...
...ISN'T GONNA BRING HIM BACK.
BUT...
HYUU
I-I DIDN'T?
I DON'T REALLY REMEMBER
...BUT
I NOTICED YOU DIDN'T COME BACK HOME ON YOUR LAST BREAK, SUZUKA. WHAT HAPPENED?

CONTINUED IN VOLUME 44

Translation Notes

Japanese is a tricky language for most Westerners, and translation is often more an art than a science. For your edification and reading pleasure, here are notes on some of the places where we could have gone in a different direction in our translation or where a Japanese cultural reference is used.

Hiroshima Carp, page iv

The Hiroshima Carp are a Japanese baseball team.

Gokon, page 10

A *gokon* is a Japanese dating ritual in which an even number of guys and girls go out together on a date. It's like a Japanese version of speed dating.

"It might be awful," page 92

In America, it might sound weird to say such terrible things about a present you're giving someone, but this is the norm in Japanese culture. When presenting a gift, Japanese people tend to show their humility by belittling the quality of the gift. The most common phrase for doing this is "*tsumaranai mono desu ga,*" which means something like "It's nothing special, but..." Of course, in this case, the tea really did turn out to be "nothing special."

Manager of the team, page 94

Japanese school sports clubs tend to have managers, who handle various chores, such as providing drinks, handling towels, and doing first aid. Managers are almost always girls. Oftentimes, girls join hoping to meet and hook up with cute, athletic guys.

Pokari, page 103

Pokari Sweat is a popular Japanese sports drink.

Yokohama, page 156

Yokohama is Japan's second-largest city. It's about thirty minutes by train from Tokyo.

Preview of Volume 4

We're pleased to present you with a preview of *Suzuka,* Volume 4.
This volume is available in English now!

朝比奈を
泣かせた
ヤツだけは!!
36

あ～～
やっぱスタートでも
勝てないかァ……

行けェ有馬!!
やっぱ他とは
レベルが違うな!!

これが高校(こうこう)No.1……!!

ありゃ～～～
やべーな こりゃ
アイツ 先行逃(せんこうに)げ切(き)りなのに……

・・・・フン
この分なら途中から流したって
余裕で勝てそうだぜ!?
・・・・・・・
ハッ
36

Basilisk

Original Story by Fūtaro Yamada
Manga by Masaki Segawa

THE BATTLE BEGINS

The Iga clan and the Kouga clan have been sworn enemies for more than four hundred years. Only the Hanzo Hattori truce has kept the two families from all-out war. Now, under the order of Shogun Ieyasu Tokugawa, the truce has been dissolved. Ten ninja from each clan must fight to the death in order to determine who will be the next Tokugawa Shogun. The surviving clan will rule for the next thousand years.

But not all the clan members are in agreement. Oboro of the Iga clan and Gennosuke of the Kouga clan have fallen deeply in love. Now these star-crossed lovers have been pitted against each other. Can their romance conquer a centuries-old rivalry? Or is their love destined to end in death?

Mature: Ages 18+

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